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BULGARIA



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NOMINATIONS FOR 2004 YEAR



In February 2005 in occasion of the XXII International tourist market "Vacations" for a third consecutive year Tourism and recreation magazine will bestow his Golden prizes on the best hotel, restaurant, Bulgarian and foreign tour operator, mayor who has succeed to transform his municipality in preferable tourist destination, media and journalist, investor, hunting area, balneological centre and face of tourism 2004. All nominations will be published in six foreign editions having agreement of collaboration and exchange of nominations with Tourism and recreation and will be included in their electronic sites. All nominations will be published in the electronic sites www.turizamiotdih.com in Bulgarian language and www.tourismandrecreation.com in English language.



We expect your comments for the best hotel, restaurant, tour operator in Bulgaria.

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Using the information bank of **Tourism and Recreation Magazine** will find the exact information about Bulgaria – where to rest, where to stay, which touroperators to chose, the appropriate business partner for you.

We expect your questions on e-mail: daker@cablebg.net

You can find additional information on our websites www.tourismandrecreation.com and www.turizamiotdih.com.

Your necessary information about tourism in Bulgaria.

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Daker

HISTORY



The territory of Bulgaria was inhabited still in the remotest antiquity. Pre-historic finds in some caves evidence the existence of intensive life on this land still in the Neolithic. The contemporary territory of Bulgaria used to be the core of the Thracian civilization which dominated over the Balkan peninsula before the new era. In the 4th century B.C. the nowadays Bulgarian territories belonged to the state of Philip of Macedonia, and later on they were a part of the Empire of Alexander the Great. In the 1st century A.D. the Roman Empire started conquering the Balkan peninsula; Byzantine, the successor of the Roman Empire, used to rule over all the Bulgarian territory up to the 7th century A.D.

At the end of the 7th century (the year 681) the Bulgarian state was established and it united the local Slavonic tribes and the proto Bulgarians, who came from the proto-Bulgarian state which at that time existed in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Still in the 9th century it established itself as one of the three biggest states in Europe, together with the Byzantine Empire and the Empire of Karl the Great. In the year 855 the brothers Cyril and Methodius invented the Slavonic alphabet; after Christianity was adopted as official religion, this alphabet was accepted in Bulgaria and from here it was later on spread in other countries (such as Russia, Serbia).





TRADITIONS

According to a tradition that has with stood for centuries, a folk carnival is organized in the village of Shiroka Luka in the first days of March every year. To this day a central place in the carnival is given to the group of adolescents and young men who are changed beyond recognition in their awe-inspiring leather and fur masks. They perform ancient scenes and dances to the rhythm of hundreds of bells tied to their bodies.

The rite sare fixed in the calendar to the Monday of the first Week before Lent - a day reffered to in this region as "Pes Monday", hence the derived local name of the masked, i.e. pessyatsi or pessyatski starsti (pes old men).

A typical feature of the ritual costumes of the pessyatsi from Shiroka Luka are the masks of goat- or sheepskin, with the fur on the outside, which covers the whole head. Some of the masks resemble animals (rams, he-goats, oxen, etc.) and they have horns, prominent ears and muzzles, as well as artificial teeth made of onion.

The pessyatsi are usually attired in the characteristic dress worn by the local women - old and patched. Below this garment they stuff straw and mould a hunch on their backs. On their waist they wear belts with bells of various sizes and shapes. The decoration of these men also includes strings of dried red peppers and onions, martenitsas, broken horseshoues, etc. The "armament" of the pessyatsi consisting of wooden "swords" and crutches for yarn.

On Pes Monday, early in the morning, the group gathers in the village square and starts its rounds in the village, observing the ritual silence all the time. People suffering from various illnesses lie on their way, because the popular belief is that they will be healed if a pessyak jumps over them. The villagers get out in front on their homes and offer various products to the pessyatsi - wheat, flour, eggs, butter, cheese, etc. - and invite them to dance in their garden so that their trees would bear more fruit.

The ritual ends with setting fire to the hunches of straw on the backs of the disguised men.

The ritual perforemed for fertility, for abundance and for health reproduces some of the basic mythological notions about the creation.



THE MAGIC OF BULGARIAN FOLKLORE

NIKOLINA CHAKARDAKOVA



"The Magic of Bulgarian folklore" is Nikolina Chakardakova's new incredible performance. It is an original progress of her creative quest and view in the native folklore presentation, a natural continuation of the ideas and suggestions in her previous performances—"Love and Pangs from Macedonia", „Lovely Youth" and "Bulgarian Wedding"; but on a new much more professional level.

With her first performances she succeeded in winning the love and recognition of several Bulgarian generations. Once one has entered the concert hall, they forget about their problems and indulge in the beauty of Nikolina Chakardakova's voice. She leads them into another world—the world of Bulgarian folklore. One can see its beauty, can feel this beauty and appraise it. You can see a happy glitter in their eyes, you can see hope and a beam of light that shines in the darkness. One feels proud because they are not ordinary people any more. They have something that others do not have—the strength that makes them love and respect their Motherland. At the time we are living now this is very difficult, but through folklore, presented in such a beautiful way, Nikolina Chakardakova makes it easy.

The performance "The Magic of Bulgarian Folklore" makes you dream and at the same time find the reality in it. It is a beautiful combination, actually an embodiment of the human's soul in a song, —an everlasting song, flowing like a spring stream, a stream which you can drink from and you can take more and more of it. The melody flies somewhere in the immensity, the lyrics stir your feelings, something in you

trembles, something blazes up and the voice is a voice of a nightingale. You are transported into a fairy tale; you breathe feeling the steps of the dance. "The Nightingale" is singing and the song drifts, drifts over the mountain, the beautiful Pirin Mountain and you forget everything. The beautiful folklore costumes, made with such love, embroidered with hard labour and skill, give the color of this enchanting view. The authenticity and hue of old Bulgarian embroidery, the marvelously embroidered female aprons, the knitted socks and stockings, the woven rugs and fleecy rugs, typical of the people in the Pirin region of Bulgaria, create a unique originality and atmosphere on the stage.



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Чрез сп. "Туризм и отдих" Вие може да осъществите контакти с най-добрите
фолклорни български певци и музиканти.*

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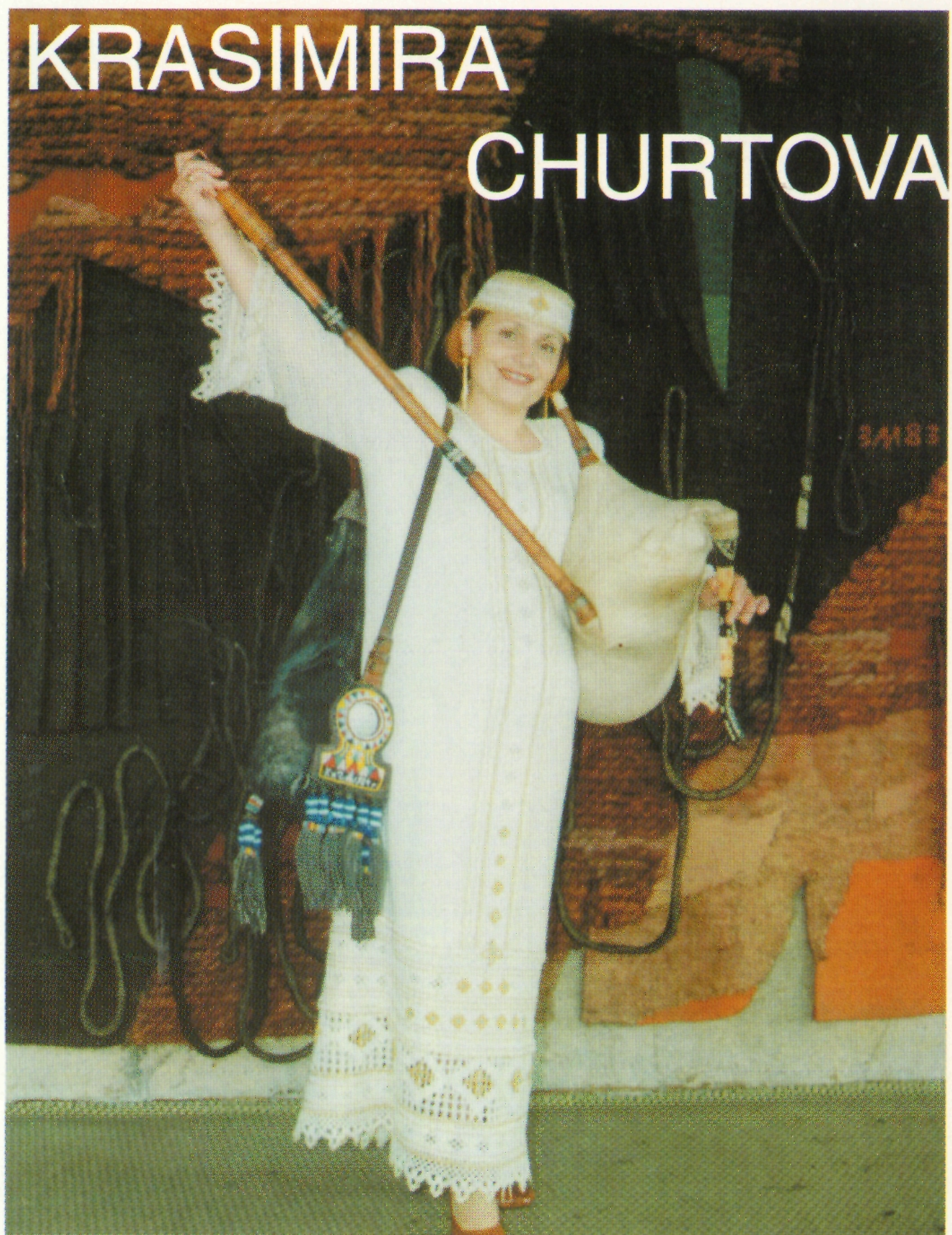
The bagpipe is my bridge to other worlds and extremely interesting foreign cultures, says Churtova. Naturally, this makes me emotionally and spiritually rich.

Over the years, the Rhodope bagpipe in her hands sounded all over the world. The woman

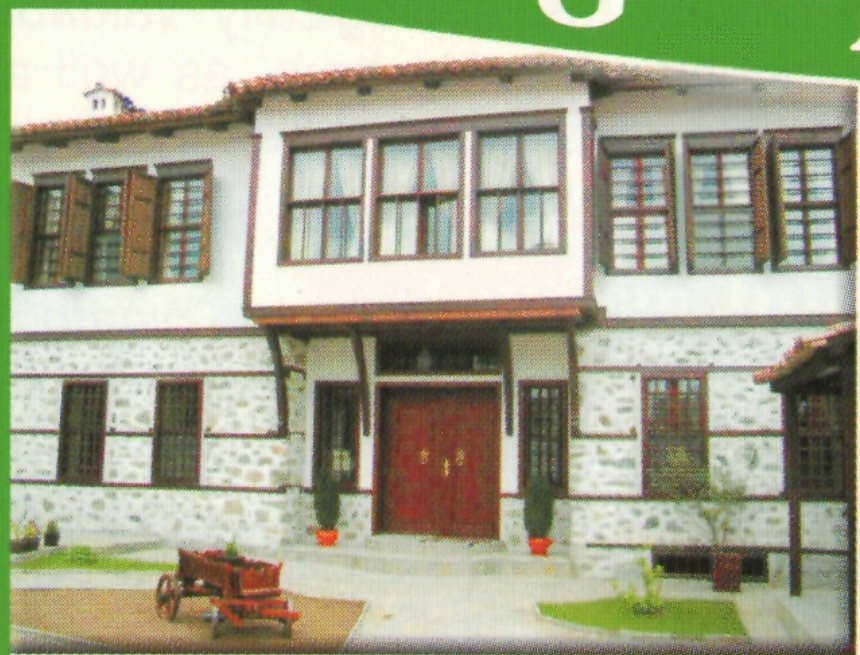
piiper is known in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Belgium, France, Italy, Czech, Poland and Germany. Her journeys enrich her experience, but on the other hand they take from time for her family.

The last recording is Krasimira Churtova's favourite song "Zaspalo e chelebiiche" (The little master has fallen asleep).

At the end they were all trying to convince me that not only I could play the bagpipe, but also sing a little. I know I am bagpiper but I never stopped singing either.



Ethnographic Surreal Complex



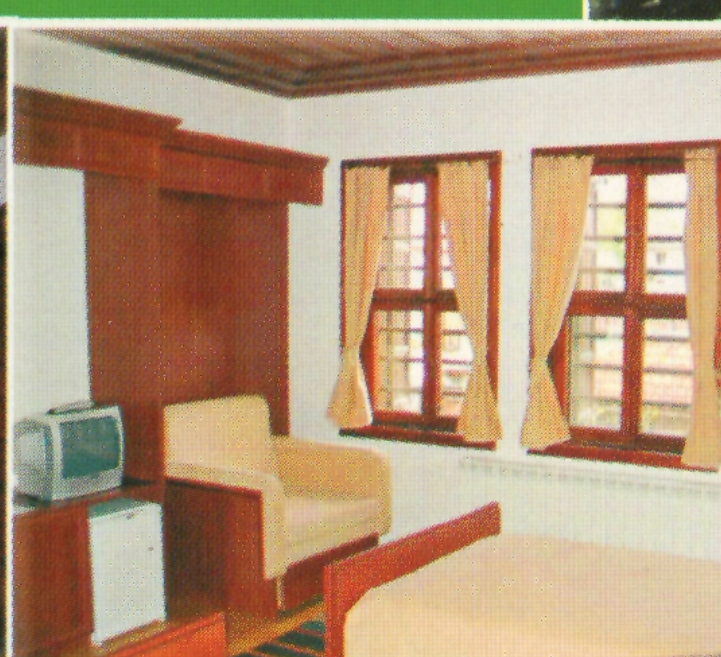
It was created by the company Bultex with the support of the municipality of Zlatograd, within the range of the programs FAR and SAPARD.

The complex includes: historical ethnographic museum exposition, 6 traditional workshops, fulling mill and water-mill, hose for guests and bedroom suite.



The complex is unique with his new approach in representing workshops and with his position in the middle of inhabitable culture and architecture monuments.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



rila monastery

RILA MONASTERY

The Nature Park Rila Monastery was established during May of the year 2000. Its territory is composed of 27,370.7 hectares of forest, meadow and alpine peaks. 13,000 hectares are alpine meadow. The park was es-

tablished in order to protect the ecologically valuable plant and animal communities existing here, as well as to preserve the remarkable diversity and beauty of the landscape. Each of these natural resources is developed for tourism.

Owing to the intense effects of high alpine weathering and the Rila massifs considerable gravitational force, here one may find typical alpine features such as scree and talus slopes. Especially impressive from a geomorphologic point of view is the area around the Kipilova Meadow, including a fascinating stone rainbow and several high alpine peaks – The Evil Tooth (Zleeya Zub), Igla-ta, Koopenite, Lovneetsa, Orlovets, and Eleni Vruhk. The entire slope rising from the Rila River is deeply serrated with many gullies and couloirs, through which rage flash-floods, avalanches and rock slides. The more famous of these gullies are Beliya Oolook, Dulgiya Oolook, and Varnika, known collectively as The Evil Streams. Due to the action of glaciers during the Quaternary geologic period, there now is a considerable number of glacial lakes at the higher elevations of this region. Within the park's boundaries there are 28 such lakes. The highest of these is the first of the so called Devil's Lakes, at an elevation of 2,445 meters, and the lowest of these is the Dry Lake, elevation 1,892 meters. Additionally, the largest alpine lake on the Balkan Peninsula is found in the park – The Smradleevo Lake, with a surface area of 212 decares and a maximum depth of 24 meters.

The Nature Park Rila Monastery is surrounded by 36



rila national park

alpine peaks reaching 2,000 meters or better. The highest of these are: Golyam Koo-pen (2,731 meters); Cherna Polyana (2,716 meters); Rilets (2,713 meters); and Popova Kapa (2,704 meters).

Several rivers and streams flow throughout the territory of the park. Among them are the following: The Rila, The Illeena and The Drooshluovitsa.

1,400 species of higher plant occur within the park's boundaries, 71 of which are included in Bulgaria's Red Book of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species. Of these 71 species, 19 are endemics, and 5 of these are local endemics which occur only within the park. The following species occur within the park and are included in the European List of Rare, Threatened and Endemic plant species under different conservation statuses: Rilski Reven, Bodjectvena Igleeka, Ynkieven Lopen, Planinsko Podroomiche, and Rilsko Podroomiche.

The particular aspect (direction of exposure) of The Rila Valley allows for unique combinations and distributions of woody species. The following occur within the park: oak, beech, fir, spruce, yew, white fir, black pine, lime, sycamore, ashe, birch, dwarf pine and juniper.

Over 150 species of vertebrate animal species occur within the park's boundaries, 14 of which are included in Bulgaria's Red Book. Observant and patient visitors may catch sight of the following species: Alpine Newt, Tree Frog, Mouse Snake, Marten, and The Imperial Eagle.

During 1986 The Rila Monastery Forest was established on 3,676.5 hectares of forested land around The Rila Monastery. This monastery was declared a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO during 1983.



madarski konnik

MADARSKI KONNIK (MADARA HORSEMAN)

The monument dates back to the early Middle Ages. The relief was cut out on an almost vertical rock massif as high as 23 m; it shows a horseman in almost real size, a running dog, a lion, and there are some inscriptions. This is a generalized picture of Bulgarian rulers.



Tourism Information Centre

Tsarevgrad Turnov EOOD



The municipal firm Tsarevgrad Turnov EOOD presents a new program for the tourist season starting in March:

- ◆ Visits to the remains of Roman town Nikopolis ad Istrum.
- ◆ Return to Roots – open-air spectacle. The audience will have the opportunity to watch a performance reproducing the coronation of King Kaloyan, as well as the farewell of the Patriarch Evtimius to the citizens of Turnovo and his blessings for Bulgaria.

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- ◆ Audio-visual show Tsarevgrad (Royal city) – Sound and Light.
- ◆ Folk festivities and customs are reproduced in the Square of Samovodska Charshiya.
- ◆ Visits to Arbanassi village: the churches of Holy Nativity and of the Sts Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the monasteries of St Nicholas and the Holy Virgin, the museum Konstantsalieva House.



A MAGIC SUMMER FOR THE BULGARIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

text: Pavlina Ilieva – Head of Archives at IAM BAS

perperikon

Alongside of the road leading to the Shipka Pass in the Balkan Mountains, close to the ancient sanctuary of Svetitsa, is the mound of the same name where a stone tomb of the sarcophagus type with incredible Thracian materials in it has been discovered. Its discoverer, Dr Georgi Kitov, says the materials date back to the middle of the 5th century BC. The mound is near the capital of Tsar Seuth III – Seuthopolis, where the famous Kazanluk Tomb, the Ostrusha, Shushmanets, Gryphons and a few more temples can be seen. Unique building techniques showing the Thracian masters' creative genius had been applied in their construction. The ruler's tomb is made from irreproachably cut granite blocks; there is a stone-flagged pavement covered with slabs. The valuable things found in the tomb are not intact, which has

given grounds to the author to maintain that the Orphic ritual of burying the dead had been observed. The singer Orpheus had been torn by the bacchantes. In a similar way the other remains in the tomb – parts of bones and a lower jaw only, give reasons to think that the dead man buried here had been Orpheus' follower. A part of the objects available in the tomb are of extreme scientific, artistic and exhibition value. One of these is a unique, incredible death mask of gold in the shape of a human face. It weighs 680 g and is of pure 24-carat gold. So far we have known about a few gold masks from Mycenae, Trebenishte at the Ohrid Lake and Sindos near Thessalonica. They all are made of a very thin foil and their weight is incomparable with that of the findings in the Svetitsata Thracian tomb. The facial features are strictly individualised. The image is of a stern, despotic and authoritative man. The eyes are closed; locks fall round the broad face, the moustaches and beard are shown in detail. The eyes are closed. The mask inspires respect. The powerful Thracian ruler is in front of us.

The gold mask was found at the place of the head, upside down and pressed down under a big stone slab. For this reason it is deformed at one ear. The technique of fixing the ears with eight rivets either is very interesting. They had been made separately from the mask. This method is known also from the masks of Trebenishte (6th century BC). The noses of these masks are fixed with rivets in the same way.

The stamp-ring of pure 24-carat gold weighing 21 grams is not less impressive at all. It is a sample of Hellenistic Art. It might have been given as a present to that rich Thracian ruler. The ring is totally preserved and nearly unused.

The Thracian weapons found in the mound are a proof of the buried Thracian ruler's power and might. The iron spears are four; the sword is big and heavy; the bronze armour is of two parts. It has openings at the sleeves at the neck where the connecting elements made from thousands of iron rings linked together had been mounted. A bronze hydria was supposed to accompany the ruler in his after life. Two huge ce-



thrace gold mask

ramic amphorae might have been full of wine. Two attic ewers decorated with red figures add to the accessories in the tomb, together with a great number of silver handles of phiales and a preserved silver phiale with two handles fixed additionally.

The stone tomb in the Svetitsata mound was unearthed on 19th August 2004.

A month and a half later Dr Georgi Kitov's team discovered a real masterpiece of ancient bronze plastic arts – a bronze head a little bigger than the normal human size, in the Golyamata Kosmatka Tomb, not far from the Svetitsata Tomb. The bronze head is certainly not an image of a deity, but a portrait of a man who had lived in reality.

This head can freely be compared with the portrait images on bronze coins of the Thracian ruler Seuth III (330-300 BC) whose residence had been the Thracian town of Seuthopolis. Probably the head had been a part of a bigger statue, and why not of a horse statue presenting the ruler Seuth III, depicted with a typical aquiline nose, locks in the greatest detail, turned up moustaches and a long beard. It could be assumed that during their invasion in Thrace (279 – 277) BC the Celts destroyed the statue that might have depicted Seut III as an equestrian and might have been in the Tsar's palace in Seuthopolis. It might be that a Thracian equestrian had managed to save only the head (weighing 12 kg), which might have been buried with rituality in the Golyamata Kosmatka mound, with strict observance of that Thracians' Orphic ritual.

This incredible masterpiece could have belonged to a great Greek master, and why not to the famous Greek sculptor from the second half and the end of the 4th century BC. At that time Pella had been working for the court, too, and portrait images and statues of all the members of the tsar's family of Macedon had been made. Lisipus worked personally for Alexander of Macedon. From ancient authors it is known that Lisipus had created over 1500 bronze statues, of which not even a single original has survived until now, except for a few Roman replicas.

It could be assumed that it is one of the last pieces of art of the great Greek sculptor Lisipus, made at the very end of the 4th century BC (about 300 BC). This date is related also to the last days of Seuth III.

This magnificent work of fine art is undoubtedly a piece from the transition period between the late classical art and early Hellenism. This is a masterpiece of world standing, created by a great Greek sculptor who had lived and created at the end of 4th century BC.

Bulgaria and in particular the Archaeological Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences owns the best part of the only Lisipus' bronze statue that has survived in the original – the portrait head of the Thracian ruler Seuth III.



pavlina ilieva (left), the president of Bulgaria (middle);
director of the IAM - BAS (right)

We have been equally excited by the latest discoveries of Prof. Nikolai Ovcharov's team related to Perperikon and Tatul in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains. In the course of archaeological investigations the hypothesis is being increasingly confirmed that the discovery of the temple-sanctuary of Perperikon will help solve the mystery

related to discovering Troy and Mycenae. It might be that one of the wonders of the ancient world – the sanctuary of Dionysus, was exactly in Perperikon. As is well known from the 'Father of History', Herodotus, who described the march of the Persian king Xerxes against the Hellenes in 480 BC, and then continued his story of how that fearful army passed along the Aegean seacoast, not far from the southern slopes of the Rhodopes.

The archaeological excavations of Perperikon went on confirming the continuity in cult practices – from the earliest antiquity to the 12th – 13th centuries.

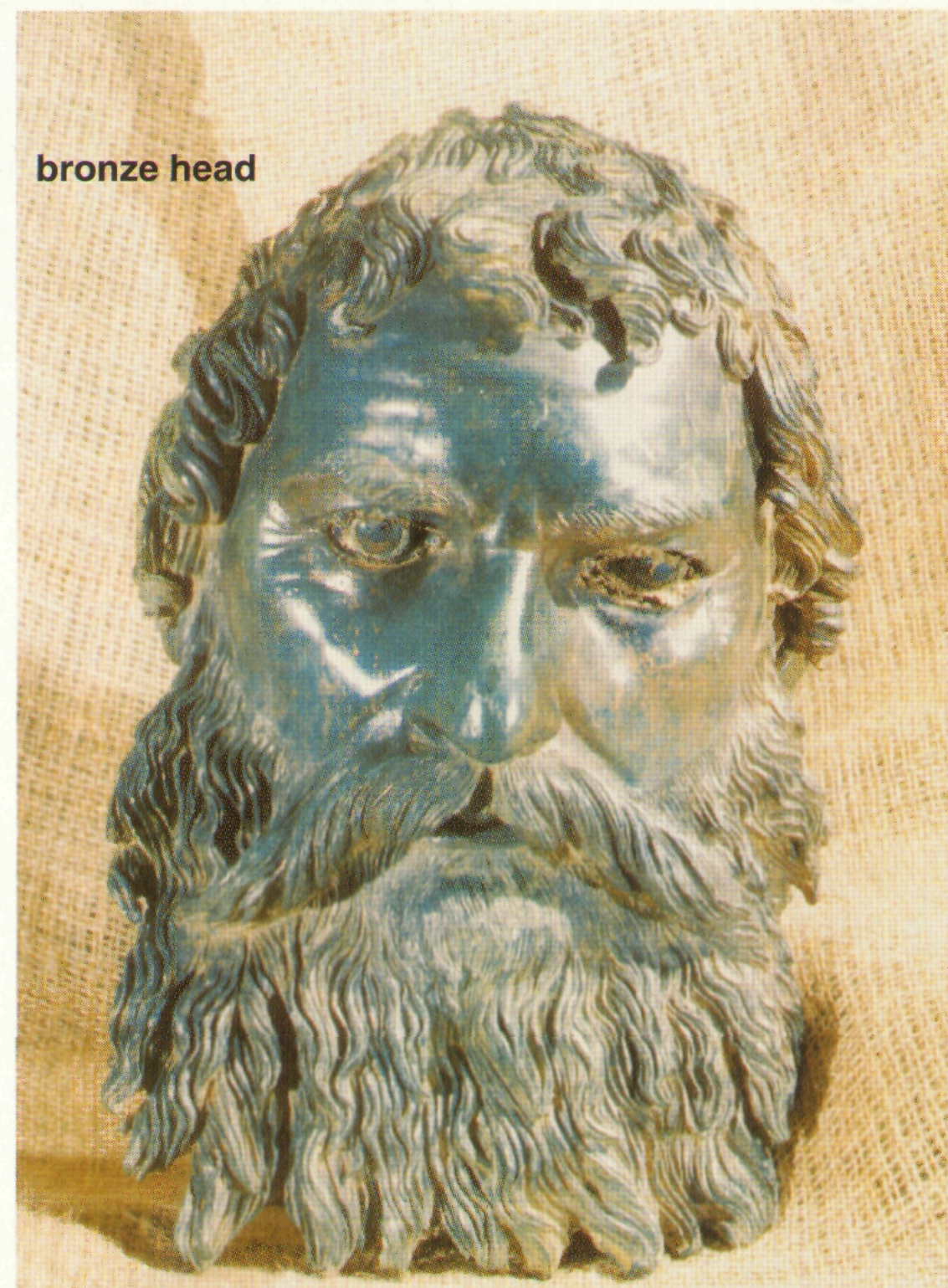
Some of the latest achievements of the archaeological excavations are also the architectural facilities cut in the rock exactly in those times. More and more new temples, buildings and streets emerged, as well as a new Christian complex.

The proofs sought in support of the existence of the famous Dionysus sanctuary at this place are already available. This summer Prof. Nikolai Ovcharov's team unearthed a ceramic fragment with strange frescoes, but why not an ancient inscription? We are awaiting the discoverers' interpretation.

A Bulgarian-Greek symposium dedicated to the results of the investigations in the Eastern Rhodopes and Perperikon was held in Kurdjali in the beginning of October. Bulgarian and foreign scientists delivered a lot of reports, amplifying our idea of the development of archaeology in this region. This was also a forum where it became possible for our two happy discoverers, Dr Georgi Kitov and Prof. Ovcharov, to present and illustrate their latest discoveries during this really magic summer for the Bulgarian archaeology and for Bulgaria.

Immediately after the discoveries had been made and the materials brought from the Svetitsata mound near the town of Kazanluk to the academic museum of Bulgaria – the Archaeological Museum, the citizens and the guests of the capital left the dynamic stereotype of today's life and buried themselves in a world created by human geniuses, not only looking at the gold mask and the gold ring, but also at the whole amount of valuable objects from the tomb, which are more than 2400 years old. A little later the other big discovery came – the bronze head from the Golyamata Kosmatka mound near the town of Shipka. On 12th October the Bulgarian public was lucky to see for the first time this masterpiece of bronze plastic arts from the end of the 4th century BC in the central hall of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) on the occasion of its 135th anniversary. We are happy that the Institute of Archaeology and Museum is a part of it. In 2005 the Museum will celebrate the centennial anniversary of opening its first exposition.

bronze head



AN OVERVIEW OF THE CULTURAL-TOURIST ROUTE

THE REGION OF KYUSTENDIL - A CENTRE OF ANCIENT CULTURES

KYUSTENDIL- NEVESTINO- SAPAREVA BANYA- RILA- RILA
MONASTERY- BOBOSHEVO- KYUSTENDIL

fort wall, hissarlaka

The three-day tour focuses on important architectural, artistic and historical monuments of culture from the 7th century BC until present day. The main tour offers the opportunity to make alternative thematic itineraries of educational, religious and scientific nature.

The starting point is the town of Kyustendil. The first day the tourists visit the sites, which are part of the National architectural and archaeological reserve Pautalia, Velbuzhd, Kyustendil. The ancient history of the town and the region is displayed in the Archaeological exhibition. The abundance of objects (from 7th century BC – 14th century AD) attracts the tourists' attention and provokes their interest in the next stages of the tour. To get an idea of what Pautalia

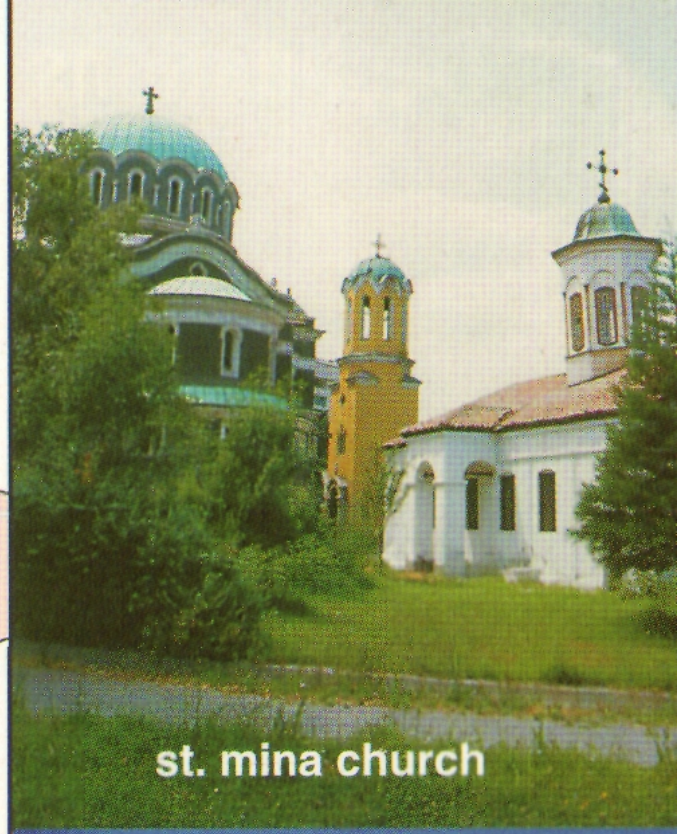
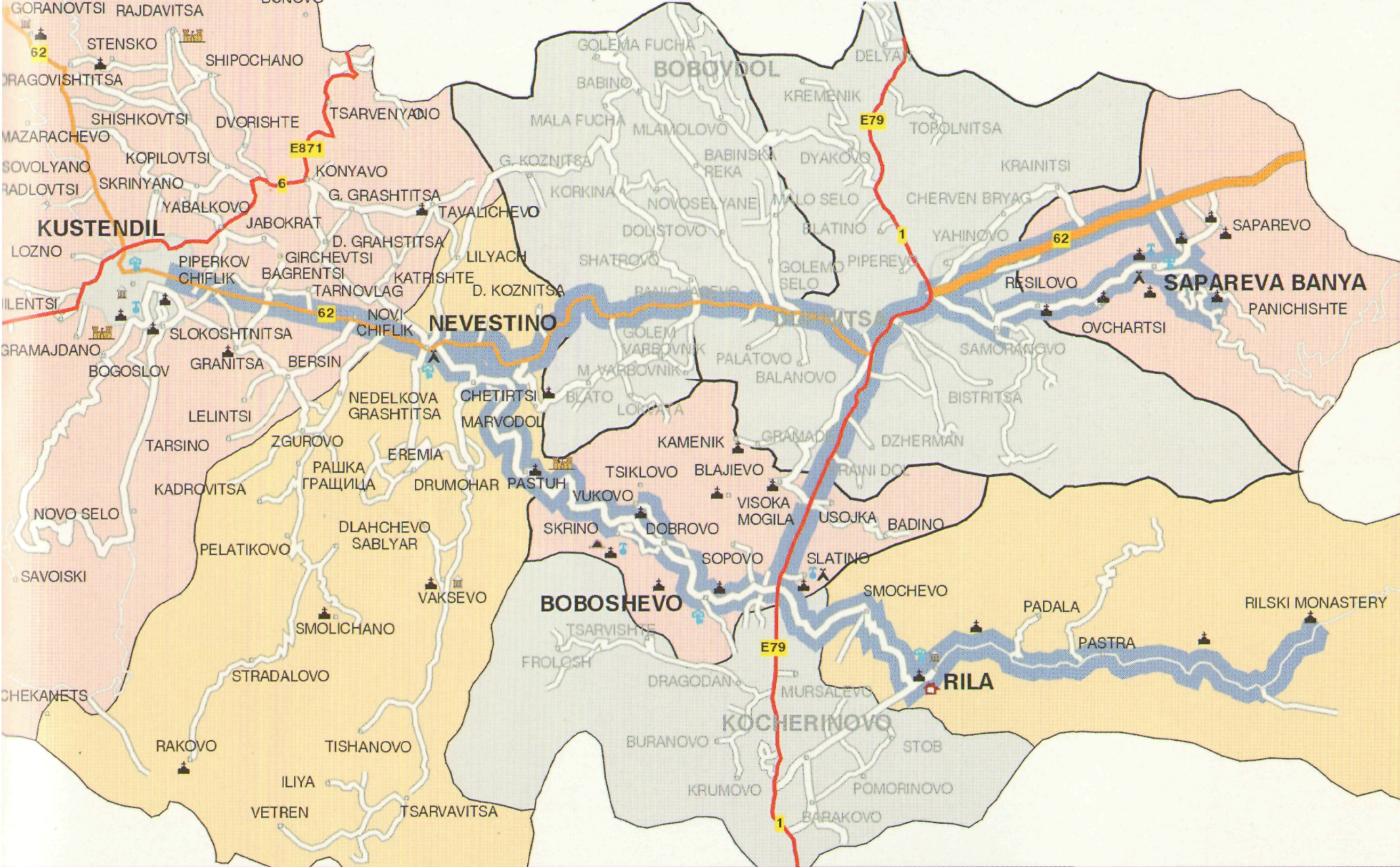
Asclepion was like, the tourists should visit the ancient therms from 2nd – 3rd centuries, which cover a territory of 3000 sq. m and are one of the symbols of present-day Kyustendil. The existence of curative mineral water springs is the reason why Kyustendil has existed as a town for two thousand years in a row, has been an administrative, economic and spiritual centre and has been famous as a resort for emperors and military leaders. Just off the therms lies the Pirkova Tower (14th – 15th centuries), which was a fortification tower in the medieval town of Velbuzhd. Another landmark in the town is the fortress situated on the Hisarlaka Hill. Here among the ruins and magnificent nature, the tourists will be absorbed in the atmosphere of past events. This place is provided with well-maintained alleys and spots where one can sit down and relax or eat.



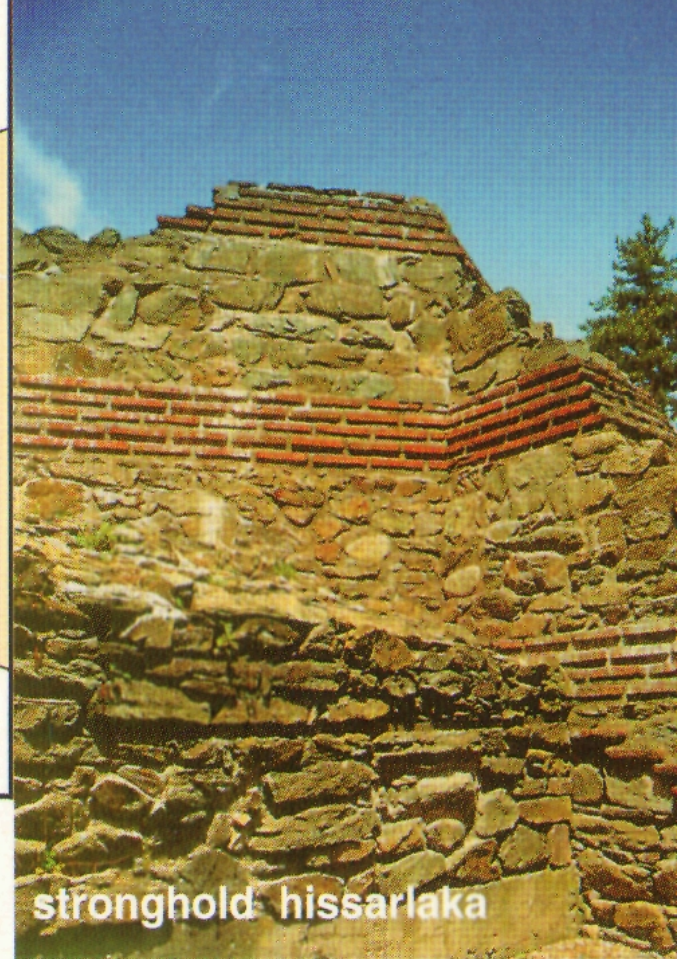
reconstruction of prehistoric lodging



mosaic from ancient pautalia



st. mina church



stronghold hissarlaka

- Monastery, Church, Chapel
- Fortress
- Museum
- Tourist info-center
- Mineral spring
- Ancient settlement
- Cave



- Tourist tour
- Main road
- Secondary road
- Road
- International and Republican road identification
- Settlement



The St. George Church from the 12th century, which is situated in the Kolusha residential district, is by far the pearl of the medieval architectural and art heritage. If

stana
vladimir dimitrov - maistora
oils

The St. George Church from the 12th century, which is situated in the Kolusha residential district, is by far the pearl of the medieval architectural and art heritage. If the tourist group is interested in the history of the Christian religion and art, they can visit the Dormition of the Mother of God, St. Demetrius and St. Mina temples dating back to the Bulgarian National Revival period. For those interested in ancient history, an observation of archaeological excavations in Kyustendil can be organised.

The tour focuses on sites connected with the more contemporary history of the town and its present day rhythm. Anyone will be delighted to see the works of the great artist Vladimir Dimitrov, the Master, which are displayed in the art gallery Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master together with the works of other artists from Kyustendil. Just off the art gallery is the home place of the great humanist Dimitar Peshev. His house contains an exhibition displaying his contribution to saving the Bulgarian Jews in 1943 - a human act, which impressed the whole democratic world. For relaxation, we offer a walk along the pedestrian alley in the town where one can enjoy the centuries-old chestnut and lime trees, the houses designed in the style and architecture typical for the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. We also offer a visit to the Emfiedzhieva House, which has an exhibition displaying the way of life of well-to-do Kyustendil citizen from the same period. At the end of the day, having gathered impressions, the tourists can have dinner in one of the many restaurants in the town. As for accommodation, the town offers hotels in excellent condition.

The second day of the tour continues with visiting the Ilyo Voivoda Museum-House. This place exhibits objects illustrating the fights Bulgarians from the Kyustendil region for national liberation and unification.

Leaving Kyustendil, the tourist group will head for the village of Nevestino situated 13 km away from the town, lying in the picturesque valley of the river Struma. Here the mediaeval



uspenie bogorodichno church



roman terms and mosque ahmed bey



mid ages church st. george

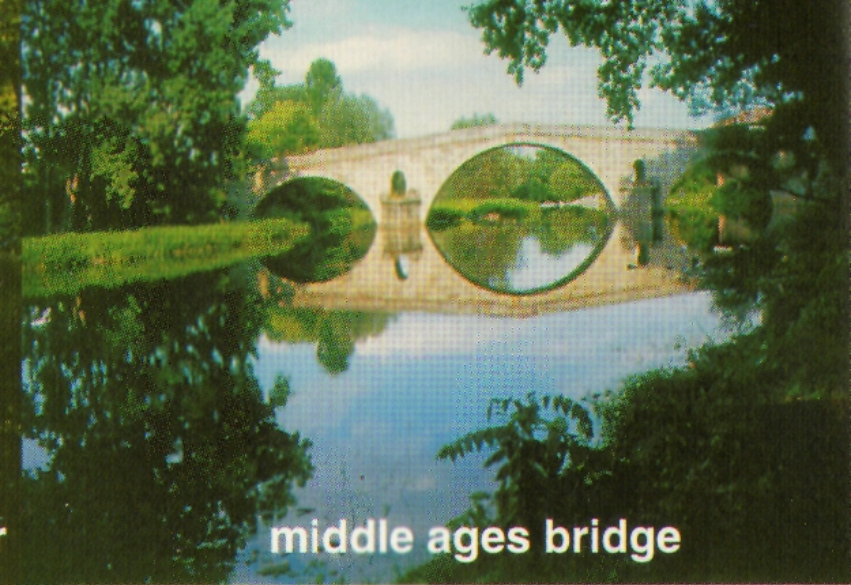
Destinations



wall-painting, st. dimitar church, boboshevo



struma river



middle ages bridge



st. petka church, vukovo

Kadin Bridge towers over the river, wrapped in the mystery of beautiful legends and sayings about people and events.

Leaving Nevestino and passing the town of Dupnitsa, the tourists will head for the town of Sapareva Banya. Here one finds a geyser (103°C), which produces an 18-metre-high hot water stream every 6 seconds. The main focus of the tour in Sapareva Banya is the St. Nicholas mediaeval church from the 12th century. Those who are interested in ancient times will visit the ruins of the ancient town of Germanea, while the ones interested in Christian art can visit the churches and chapels in the town and its vicinities, which date back to the Bulgarian Revival Period. Both the town and the resort Panichishte, lying 10 km away from it offer excellent conditions for eating and accommodation.

The tour continues with the town of Rila, where the tourists can visit the Babinska Mahala (Grandmother's neighbourhood) complex from the Revival period, the mediaeval church St. Archangel Michael with its unique frescoes. 2 km away from the town, on the way to the Rila Monastery, is the convent Orlitsa (female eagle) with the St. Peter and Paul church. Going along the picturesque valley of the river Rilska, deeper and deeper into the heart of the 'Great Rila desert' those fascinated by the surrounding beauty can see the towering walls of the Great Rila Monastery. Here the impressions build up one after the other - the unique architecture, the church with its wood-carving and frescoes of high artistic value, the unique Magernitsa (kitchen), the mediaeval Hreljo's Tower, the superb interior design of the guest-

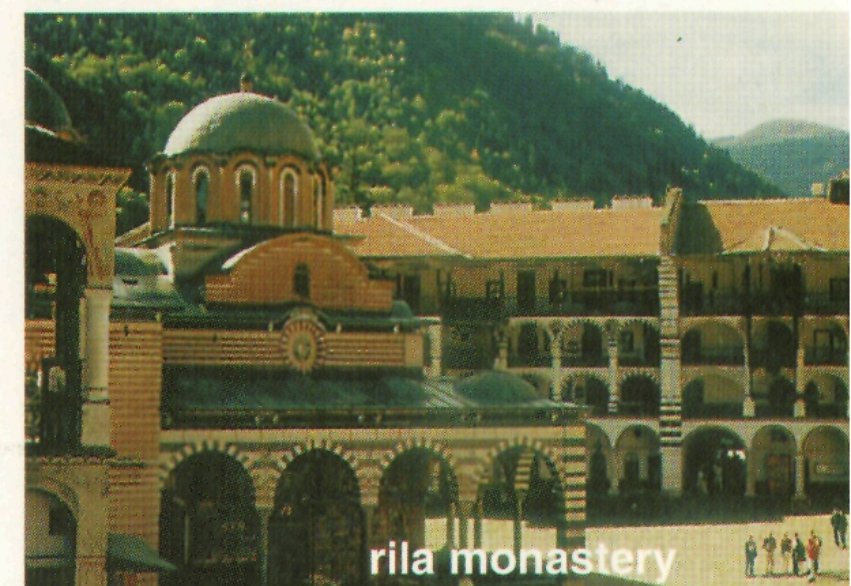
hostels, the rich museum exhibition, etc. And all this, being in organic unity with nature, inspires awe to the man-made things, as well as awe to God.

After visiting the Rila Monastery the tour changes direction back to the town of Rila and after passing through it heads for Boboshevo. In the vicinity of the town lies the St. Dimitar Church - a magnificent monument of the mediaeval architecture and paintings from the 15th century. On the way back to Kyustendil the tour passes by the enchanting Skrino gorge and again returns to the Kyustendil valley. Those who are interested might visit the medieval churches St. Petka in the village of Vukovo and St. John in the village of Pastuh.

Pleasantly tired by the impressions and emotions, the tourists will again sink into the calm atmosphere of ancient and modern Kyustendil.

For contacts:

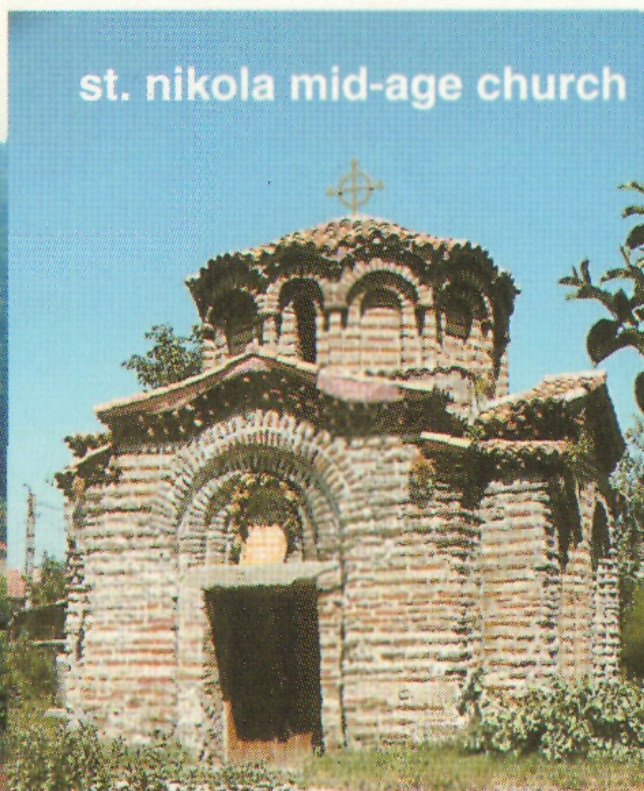
Regional Museum of History "Acad. Yordan Ivanov", town of Kyustendil
2500 Kyustendil
55 Bulgaria Blvd
tel.: 078/50095; 078/50098;
fax: 078/50095
e-mail: museum.kn@mail.bg



rila monastery



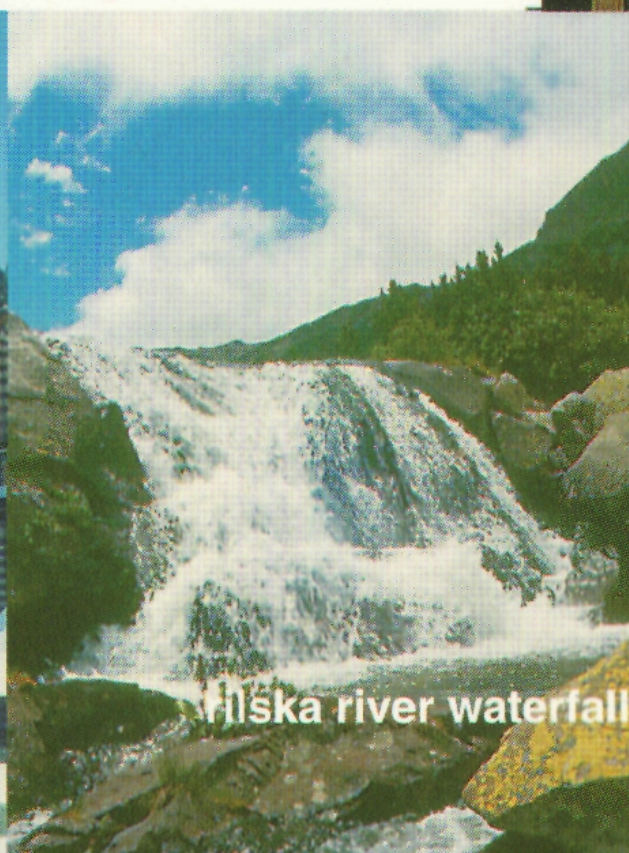
geyser, hissar



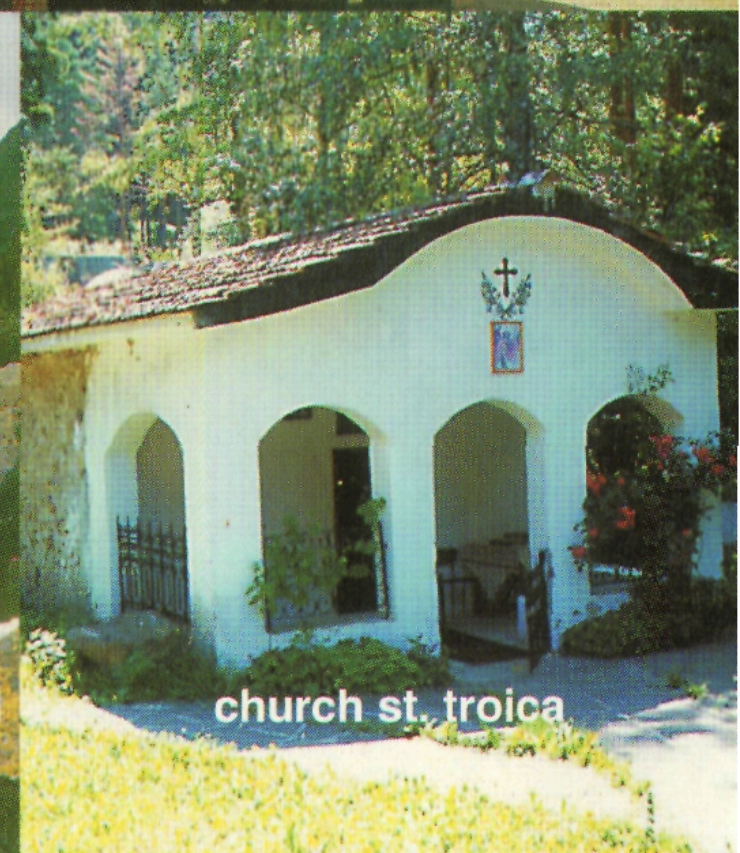
st. nikola mid-age church



hreljova tower



rilska river waterfall



church st. troica

FLORA & FAUNA



The Bulgarian higher flora is characterised by an extremely large number of species. The higher plants are divided in 130 families and 872 genera with 3550 species, 847 varieties and 2000 sorts.

The mountains are rich in endemic species, some of them growing only in these lands - Balkan-Range primrose, Rhodope rose, Thracian oak-tree, lily, Rila rhubarb and many others. The vegetation cover is represented by forests occupying about one third of the territory of the country, shrubs and grass. The broad-leaved deciduous forests are predominant. They cover the valleys and the hilly areas of the country (different oak varieties and European beech), and the lower and medium part of the mountains with an altitude of 1,400 - 1,800 m (common Gorun, hornbeam, Mysian beech). A coniferous forest belt has developed in the high parts of the mountains, represented by Scots (Wild) Pine, European Spruce, European Silver Fir and Boris Fir. Special colour is imparted by the Balkan endemics white and black fir.

Characteristic of the country are the riverside forests of Common (Field) Elm and taller ash.

The animal world in Bulgaria is of a various origin. Middle (central) European species are found in North Bulgaria and in the Balkan Range, steppe species - mainly in East Bulgaria, Arctic-Alpine species - in the high parts of the mountains, Mediterranean - in the southern part of the country. 29 000 animal species have been identified.

The invertebrate fauna is rich in species. The large number of endemic species in the Western Rhodopes, Pirin, Rila, the Central and Western Balkan Range makes these regions places of special scientific interest.

The vertebrate fauna is represented by 207 species and varieties of fish and round-mouthed, 52 amphibia and reptiles, 397 bird and 40 mammal species.

The animals to be seen in the forests are red deer, roe, wild boar. Mountain fauna is characterised by European polecat,

badger, wolf, fox, small rodents. The bird fauna is rich - there are 252 species of nesting birds. The two migration routes of birds pass through the Bulgarian lands: Via Pontica and Via Mediterranean - along the Strouma Valley. Out of the 29 bird species identified in Europe, threatened on a world scale, 16 species nest in Bulgaria: Dalmatian pelican, white-tailed sea eagle, black vulture, royal eagle, redthroat goose and others.



PARK DANCING BEARS



The presence of VIER PFOTEN in Bulgaria is not a chance. Our country has unique nature, which favours the existence of many species in their natural environment. At present our territory is inhabited by 860 wild bears.

However, in the beginning of the 21st century, the precedent of “dancing” bear still exists in our country.

The “dancing” bear that has been living in an extrinsic environment cannot revert to its normal, wild life.

The goal of VIER PFOTEN is to stop mistreatment of “dancing” bears in Bulgaria and to provide quiet and appropriate existence close to that of their wild relatives.

DANCING BEARS PARK project is the logic solution of this problem. It started in 2000 with a pilot phase.

DANCING BEARS PARK is situated in South Rila, at

1 345 m above sea level, 11 km away from the Town of Belitsa and 180 km from the capital of Bulgaria – Sofia. It covers 120 000 m². It is constructed in accordance with the requirements of the latest scientific standards and in cooperation with world acknowledged experts. DANCING BEARS PARK offers to its inhabitants dense forests and hills for walk and seclusion and meadows. By this way we can provide to bears environment and safe place that is closest to their natural habitat. Here for first time they can feel and demonstrate their instincts of wild animal and inborn behaviour that have been suppressed during their slavery. The park is the appropriate solution of the “dancing bear” problem and is a guideline for new projects in the field of animal protection.

DANCING BEARS PARK consists of two parts, connected with 30 meters long safe bridge for the bears. The two parts of the park are divided into 7 sectors, connected with 11 passages. The length of the fence enclosing the sectors is 3 326 m. It is installed on 1 150 pylons and is 3,20 m high. In order to provide the safety of the bears as well as of the visitors, a 26 608 m long electric shepherd is installed.

Brown bear can reach 2 m in length. Their weight is between 135 and 390 kg, and is running very fast – 40-50 km/h. Brown bears have very developed sense of smell. Brown bears hibernate in winter. Their sleep is not deep. Bears can be easily awakened and when disturbed they leave their den. Before going to sleep bears eat much in order to gather enough nutritive substances. They eat green parts of plants, lush grass, fruits, nuts, insects, etc. In January during the hibernation the female gives life to 1 or 2 blind bear cubs. They weigh between 220 and 680 grams. In the beginning they grow very slowly. The mother suckles them 5 months but the cubs stay with her till their second year. Bears give birth once in a period of 2,5 years. Bears live approximately 30 years. In Bulgaria bears can be found in the Rila, Pirin, Rhodopes, Middle Balkan and Vitosha Mountains.





Horse base ZDRAVETS

We lose much time in tries of tourist destination, because maybe we do not know that at 60 km from Sofia, near Botevgrad the Skravena village is situated. Recently in the vicinity of the village has been opened the base for horses Zdravets. The base offers several opportunities: riding-school, open air riding and short marches. Everyone wishing to prove the pleasure of riding can do it and can be sure to find

the right teacher who is able to change the first timorous attempt in unforgettable experience. To the combination of recreation, sport and amusement you can add the defiance to ride across the tracks of the past and to become part of ancient ages thanks to the tale of your guide. The region represents an original mosaic of the past - from the antiquity till the present-day. Everyone can sea the remains of Thracian antiquity, to visit the castle walls or to became part of the atmosphere of the numerous monasteries, the natureXs force - the biofield which helps you to forget the trivial round. Zdravets horse base is an excellent place for recreation and amusement for adults and children, for Bulgarians and foreign tourists, an unforgettable touch with the unknown and interesting story of the people of Bulgaria and the region of Skravena.

www.zdravecbg.com

Skravena

Region of Botevgrad

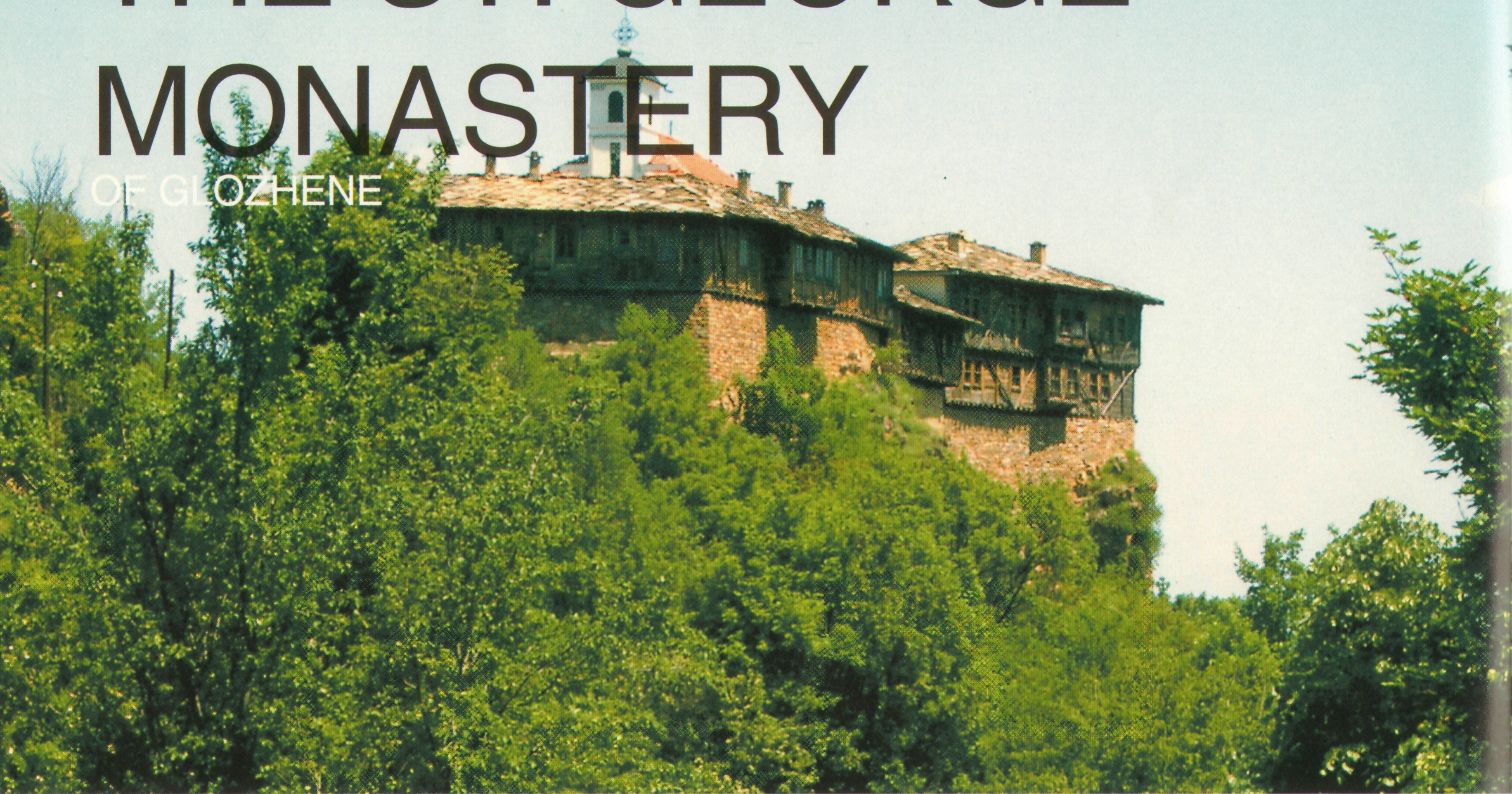
Tel.: +359 2 870 1150;

+359 889 711570



THE ST. GEORGE MONASTERY

OF GLOZHENE



The St. George Monastery of Glozhene is located on the eastern slope of the Lisets hill in the Western Fore-Balkan, below the Kamen Lisets peak, and 3 km south-west of the village of Glozhene.

Prince Georgi Glozh from Kiev founded it in the 13th century (1224). He had been chased by the Tatars after his flight from South Russia and was shown hospitality by the brothers Assen. In acknowledgement of their gesture, the prince built the monastery above the place where he had settled.

The monastery consists of a church surrounded by residential buildings, which form a closed space like an inner courtyard. Sheer cliffs descend from three sides and give the monastery the appearance of an unapproachable castle. The buildings were constructed in 1858 and were later reconstructed. The present-day temple was built in 1931 in the place of the old church that had collapsed in an earthquake. Prince Glozh brought the famous, wonder-working icon of St. George (13th century) to the monastery from the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. Now the original icon is kept in the bishopric of Lovech and the church has a replica of it. The monastery is also proud of having a Kiev-Pechersk Gospel of 1745, as well as some old printed books.

In the 18th century the monastery was one of the biggest cultural centres in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian metropolitan Kliment was sent on exile to the monastery for political reasons. There the merited spiritual, cultural and political figure was kept in very hard conditions for nine months in 1893-94. The Monastery of Glozhene has been declared a monument of culture.

Near the monastery is the Morovitsa cave. With its 3025 m of underground cave galleries it is one of the

longest caves in Bulgaria. The well-blazed trail passes near the monastery fountain – a well laid out place to sit and rest, and through the Manevitsa meadow, which is at the foot of the Lisets peak. A wonderful panoramic view opens out – from the monastery, down the Vit River valley and the village of Glozhene, the Vasilyovska Mountain, to the rock massifs above the town of Teteven and the Vezhen and Kozyata Stena peaks in the Balkan Range.



DiMario Hotel



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EXPO

EXPO

EXPO

EXPO

From 8 to 13 of August 2005 Bansko will be a centre of International

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For more information and participation:

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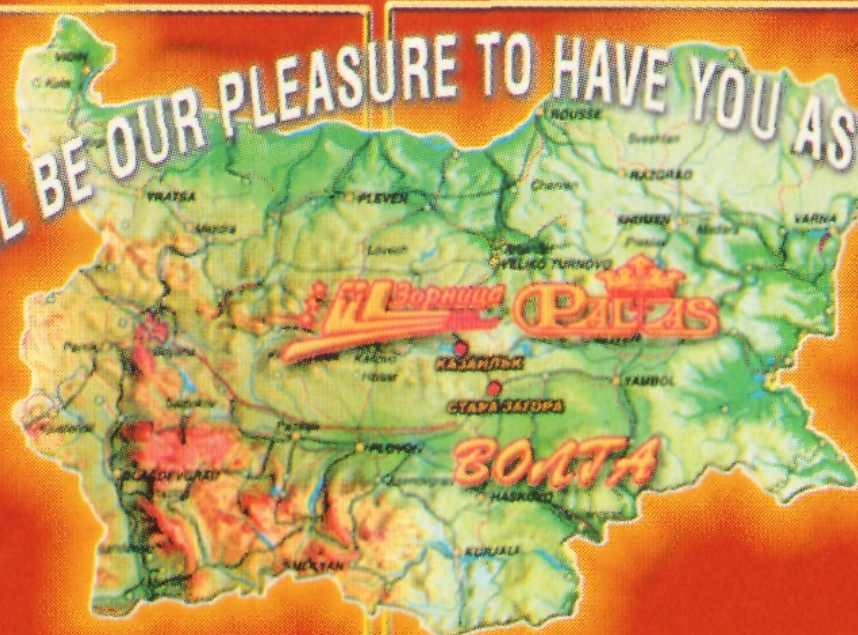
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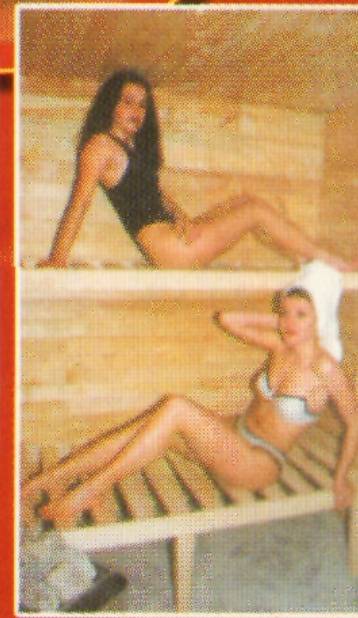
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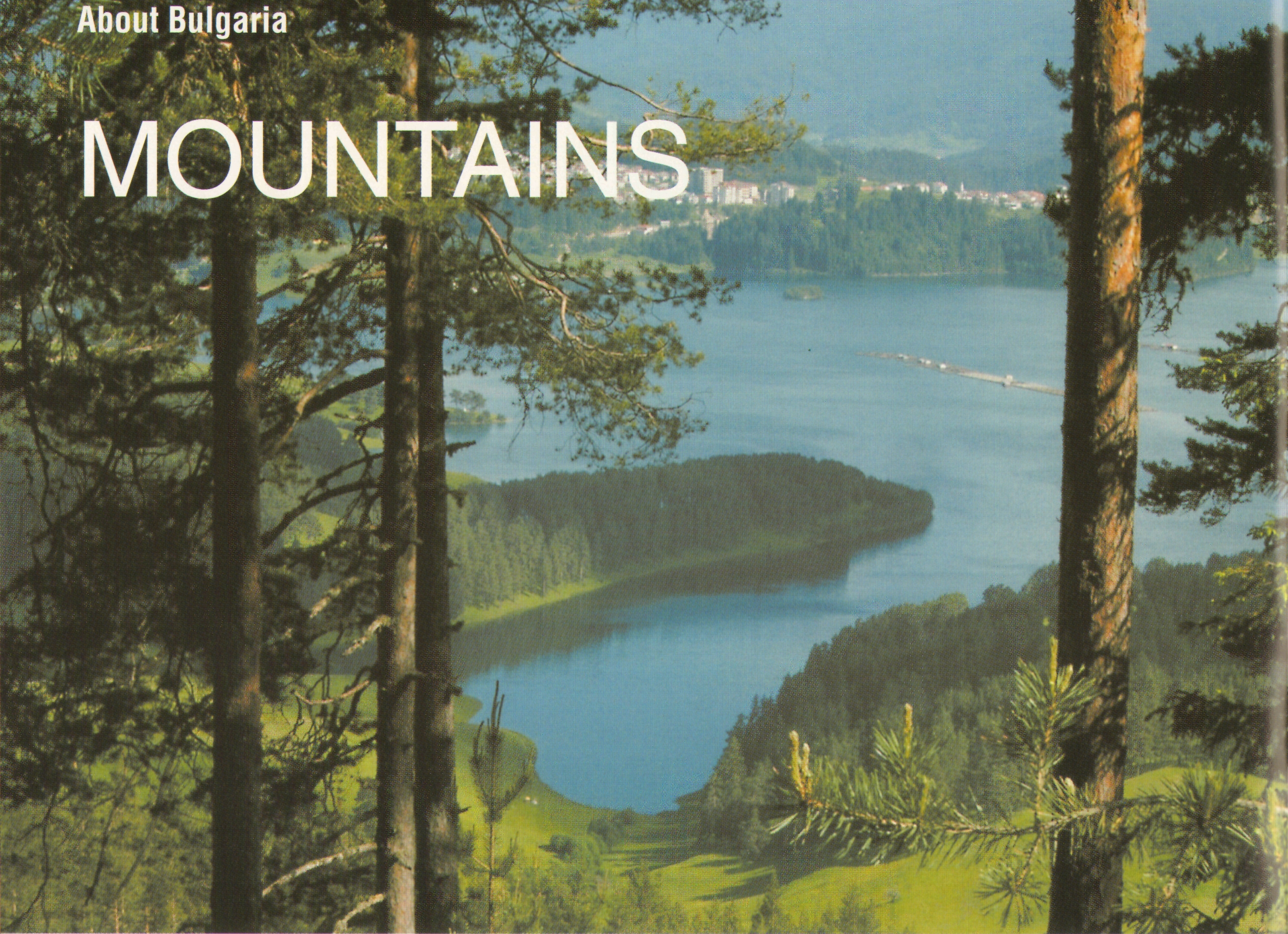
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MOUNTAINS



PIRIN MOUNTAIN

Pirin mountain rises between the deep valleys of the Strouma and Mesta rivers, and its peaks, as it strung one next to the other, rise each sharper and more fearful than the other. The mountain is about 80 km long and up to 40 km wide. The most beautiful and of definitely Alpine character is the relief of the northern part of Pirin. Forty peaks rise at a height of more than 2,600 m. The highest peak, Vihren, is 2,916 m. The climate of Pirin results from the high altitude above sea level and the dominating air masses coming from south-west and west. The average annual temperature at Vihren peak is 3,7° C, and the amount of rainfall and snow is 1,571 millimeters.

RILA MOUNTAIN

With its highest elevation above sea level at Moussala peak, namely 2,925 m, Rila is the highest mountain on the Balkan



Peninsula. Its average height above sea level is 1,487 m, and its total area is 2,629 sq. m. The nowadays relief of the mountain is the result of glacier exaration activity. During the Pliocene the mountain was covered with glacier several times. The lower boundary of everlasting snow was about 2,000 m above sea level. As a result the today's glacier exaration shapes have been obtained, namely troughs, cirques, collars. There is well developed tourist and balneological infrastructure in Rila - hot mineral springs, mountain resorts, sports contest centers, mountain huts, marked tourist routes, radio-link and mountain rescue brigades, as well as historical and religious sighthseeing sites.

BALKAN RANGE

The Balkan Range fea ulgaria in terms of morphology and structure. From the Timok river valley up to Emine horn on the Black Sea coast the length of the mountain range is 555 km. Its width in the eastern part is up to 50 km and it occupies about 10 % of the territory of Bulgaria. The highest elevation is Botev peak, 2,376 m above sea level. The average altitude above sea level is 795 m. The relief of the mountain from west to east is structured by chains and folds which have been further shaped by the external earth forces. There are predominantly beech and oak tree forests. The tourism infrastructure in the Balkan Range is very well developed. However, it is closely related to that of the Fore-Balkans. There are more than 100 tourist huts, homes and shelters in this mountain system.

RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

The Rhodopes are a huge mountain massif in the Balkan Peninsula. The mountain, buried in age-old forests and greenery, is cut up by a complex, labyrinth-like system of valleys. The length of this huge mountain range is 240 km from west

to east and 100 km from north to south. The highest peak is Golyam Perelik, 2,191 m and the average altitude above sea level is 785 m. Climate is formed under the climatic influence of the Mediterranean Sea. The average annual temperature in Western Rhodopes is 5-90 C and in Eastern Rhodopes it is considerably higher. Winter is open and snowy. The thick snow cover lies over the western parts of the mountain for about five months.

The Rhodopes have been inhabited since the dawn of European civilization and are famous for their legends and myths, cultural and folk traditions. Homer called this vast land "The snowy mountains of the Thracians". The Rhodopes are associated with the ancient legend about the mythical Thracian singer Orpheus who, grief-stricken after the death of his wife, Eurydice, withdrew into the forests of Thrace (the age-old woods of the Rhodopes).

Unique architectural monuments can be found here, the most significant of them being the traditional houses which are in harmony with the mountain scenery. The picturesque mountain is a natural habitat of some rare animal and bird species and the mild climate determines the exclusive richness of endemic plant species.

Two caves in the Rhodopes have lighting inside: Dyavolsko Gurlo (devil's throat) and the Cave of Yagodino. Tourism is developed well here and the mountain hotels and huts have hospitably opened the doors for visitors. Of interest to the guests of the Rhodopes are: the incredibly picturesque town of Smolyan built in terraces, which is the longest town in Bulgaria, the established holiday town of Chepelare, the architectural, folk and ethnographic reserve of Shiroka Luka, the wonderful resort Pamporovo and many other tourist sites.

The beauty and wildlife of the mountain have been prised in numbers of folk songs



SMOLYAN

Smolyan, born by human love and a generous mother nature, jealously keeps the best examples of local architecture. Straddling the river Cherna, it is surrounded by centenarian forests and lofty cliffs reflecting in the clear waters of the Smolyan lakes.

Smolyan has had an eventful history. The area was populated during the second and first millennium B.C., and the town owes its name to the tribe of the Smolyany who came to this place in the 7th century.

In early 20th century, there were three neighbourhoods at the site of today's Smolyan: Ustovo, Raikovo and Smolyan. The local houses are unique for Bulgaria.

Today's Smolyan is a modern economic, cultural and tourist centre.

The favourable climate and mountain charm make the Smolyan area the perfect place for holiday and recreation during all seasons.

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hotel Nevrokop
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The 3 Stars Hotel Nevrokop offers to his guests 70 double and single rooms and 12 suits with air condition, mini-bar, cable TV, international telephone connection.

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BANSKO

RESORT FOR ALL SEASONS



PLACES TO SEE

Bansko has been declared a unique town of international importance to commercial tourism (1979). Apart from the beautiful Pirin and the numerous spots of natural beauty the town also boasts its many historic sites. Remains of ancient fortresses have been preserved in the Staroto Gradishte (Stankale) locality about 4 km southwest of the town and also in the Yulen locality (downstream Demyanitsa river). Thracian tumuli have been uncovered in the vicinity of Staroto Gradishte. Archaeological works have unearthed a 2nd century B.C. burial site containing a set of bronze surgical instruments, remains of medicinal preparations etc. in the centuries-old Dobrokyovitsa locality (west of Bansko). Scientists assume that a medieval settlement used to exist in the Sveta Troitsa (Holy Trinity) locality (northeast of town). Southeast of Bansko are remains of the late-medieval single-nave churches "St George" and "St Elijah".

Bansko is the birthplace of famous Bulgarian enlighteners, poets, writers, painters, iconographers and revolutionaries: Mile Bizev, Y. Vaptsarov, Nikola Vaptsarov, M. Vezyov, Lazar German, B. Golev, hadji K. Dagaradin, Lazar Konchagov, M. Kolchagov, Toma Vishanov, Dimitar Molerov, Simeon Molerov, Neofit Rilski, Paisii Hilendarski, Ivan Popstefanov, Mile Rahov, Terzi Nikola, Asen

Todev, Blago Todev, Nikola Furnadjiev etc. Monuments commemorating Nikola Vaptsarov (1956, sculpture by Iliya Iliev) and Paisii Hilendarski (1976, sculpture by Stoi-choTodorov) have been erected in the town.

Bansko is famous for its well-preserved traditions and culture, its original Revival-period architecture and its local culinary specialities (Banski shashlik, Banska kapa-ma). Visitors to this mountain town have always left it captivated by the spirit of Banskalii (Bansko residents) wishing they could once again return to the heart of Pirin; to one with nature is something everyone craves for in their hurried everyday lives.

CULTURE

Bansko is an important cultural centre for the region. According to historic records, the settlement was first established about 9th -10th century A.D. on the site where ancient Thracian settlements had existed. In the 18th century it was mentioned as a large and prosperous village of thriving crafts and trade reaching as far as the Aegean and Europe.

Bansko is the centre of a historically important arts school. In the 18th and early 19th century talented painters and woodcarvers created works of art in the houses and churches of Bansko, the Rila Monastery, the monasteries on Mount Athos, Serbia and Macedonia. The most famous painters belonged to the Molerovi clan, starting from its founder Toma Vishanov. During the second half of the 19th century another group of painters lead by Usta (Master) Ognyan Ognev made the decorative elements in the "Sveta Troitsa" church, Velyanova Kashta etc. Also famed were other craftsmen and painters such as Angel Velyanov, Mihalko Golev, Dimitar Sirleshtov, Ivan Ter-ziev, Nikola Benin. Bansko gained renown for its wood-carving and local masters.

A monastery school was opened in Bansko in 1817 or 1838 and in 1848 a "mutual school" was founded. Bansko is the birthplace of nationally admired enlighteners, revolutionaries and poets such as Paisii Hilendarski - the author of "Istoriya Slavenobolgarskaya" (History of Slavo-Bulgars)(1762), Neofit Rilski - the founder of secular education and the first Bulgarian encyclopaedist, Nikola Vaptsarov - a remarkable Bulgarian poet of international renown.

Original fortified and artistically decorated houses have been preserved from the 18th and 19th century, built almost entirely of stone, with small barred windows, tall walls, heavy metal-plated gates and interconnected by narrow and winding cobble-stone streets. Remarkable as architectural monuments and examples of fine art are the Velyanova, Benina, Sirleshtova, Todeva, Molerova, Dragostinova, Sharkova houses. The Sveta Troitsa church, the bell tower with the big clock, the midlevel church "Assumption of the Virgin Mary" with its remarkable wood-carved iconostasis make for fine accents in Bansko's atmosphere. Also noteworthy are the museum houses and collections, souvenir shops and romantic holiday residences, hotels and taverns cuddled in the narrow and picturesque streets.

BANSKO OFFERS WONDERFUL POSSIBILITIES FOR SUMMERTIME TOURISM

The thing that attracts hundreds of tourists to Bansko is the unique combination of natural beauty, climate and mineral waters of the town, as well as its atmosphere, typical of the Bulgarian National Revival.

EXPO EXPO EXPO

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Exposition and tourist market- contracting "Mountain, eco, balneological, and balneo-energy tourism". Bansko is the most dynamic developing Bulgarian mountain resort and winter and ski tourism leader having own past, rich culture and historical heritage, original museums, folklore, and crafts. Bansko is situated in South-Western Bulgaria, surrounded by the mountain chains of Pirin, Rila and Rhodopes and thermal sources. In the mountainsides are situated the best ski centre in Bulgaria. Organizers : Municipality of Bansko, Daker Ltd and Tourism and Recreation magazine

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www.tourismandrecreation.com

Unique are also the numerous mountain massifs and reserves. The town is the gateway to the most attractive part of Pirin with its symbols – the wild goat and the edelweiss. The incredible relief formations that attract Bulgarian and foreign tourists are: the Koncheto, the Banski Suhodol circus with one of the few snow-patches in Bulgaria, the Bunderitsa and Kazana caves, which are among the deepest in Bulgaria, the Yulen nature reserve and the crystal lakes – more than 100 in number.

Thirteen major mountain routes and seventeen secondary ones have been developed within the territory of the Pirin National Park to serve the purposes of summer-time tourism. Rock scramble is allowed on six sites. In the high alpine part of the mountain summer-time accommodation for tourists is offered in eight mountain chalets and five shelters.

Bansko has specific climate. The Aegean-Sea waft combined with the crystal clear water of Pirin attract lots of tourists during the hot summer days.

The warm mineral water springs in the villages of Dobrinishte and Banya are with proven healing properties. They are a good precondition for development of spa treatment in the municipality.

The exceptional architectural style typical of the Bulgarian national-revival period and the historical and cultural heritage of the town create favourable conditions for development of congress and cultural tourism in Bansko. ➡



THE MOUNTAIN RESORT OFFERS A MODERN SKI ZONE

The town nestling in the most beautiful alpine part of the 'mountain of gods', Pirin, offers excellent conditions for mountain sports and tourism.

Unlike the other winter resorts, Bansko offers tourist accommodation in the town only, where there are 4200 beds. The local people's hospitality is well known. They mostly meet tourists in their small family hotels and guesthouses, which are now 34, but their number has been on the increase recently. The resort has seven three-star and eight four-star hotels; a five-star hotel is under construction, too.

In winter a modern cabin lift takes skiers from the town to the Bunderishka Polyana area. There is a way station at Chalin Valog. A cabin capacity is 2400 people per hour.

Apart from the cabin lift, there is also an asphalt-covered road from Bansko to the Vihren chalet, which connects the ski-zone in the alpine part of the mountain with the town. The road was repaired this summer. A ski path has been made from the first lift station to the Bunderishka Polyana area and skiers use it to race downhill to the resort. The ski path will be covered with snow with artificial snow machines throughout the winter season.

A quad-chair lift equipped with transparent plastic helmets started operating for the first time in Bulgaria last season in Bansko. The helmets protect skiers from the wind in the higher parts of the mountain.

The Austrian company Doppelmayr is the manufacturer of all new ski facilities in Pirin: a cabin lift, three quad-chair lifts, two ski tows of the anchor type with

capacity of 900 persons per hour, children's facilities.

The concessionaire Yulen JSC has projected a mobile revolving path for the youngest skiers, as well as new amusement trains and a kindergarten.

The facilities servicing the ski runs in the Shiligar-nika area, on the plateau of the Todorka peak and the Chalin Valog area have been repaired and are in good condition for the forthcoming tourist season.

In the ski-zone whose centre is Bansko there are 14 ski runs of different levels of difficulty at the disposal of skiers. Two more ski runs are to be added to them this year, with two new ski lifts, which are being set up. The ski runs are clean and ready. They have markings and are foolproof. 24-hour servicing of ski runs has been provided, using snow tamping machines and the ten snow groomers available.

New possibilities are opened up for snowboarders with the special half-pipe facility.

The most modern chip card system provides access to the cabin lift and the other ski facilities in the zone through automatic opening of the entranceway when the card is regularly validated. A deposit is paid for every card, which is refunded at the end of the day, on returning the card.

Large-scale construction is going on in the resort. In 2004 alone the municipal authorities have given permission for building of 70 hotels. Most of them are in the new rest and recreation zone in the Gramadeto area in the town environs. For this reason the municipal authorities' priorities are: building of the necessary roads and infrastructure, water and electricity supply for the new buildings, providing of car parks and good road traffic organisation.

Today's construction contains elements of the typical architectural style of Bansko. The new hotels and complexes are built with materials that are traditional for the town – wood and round stone, which helps preserve the architectural styles of the town; and its central part built in a style typical of the national-revival period remains unchanged and is kept as a monument of culture.

A lot of old recipes have been preserved and the present-day inhabitants of Bansko prepare delicious specialities. Guests can taste the culinary specialities typical of the season and Bansko in the famous taverns. They are more than 150 and are with antique furniture in the old style of Bansko – another traditions from the past, which has been revitalised nowadays. ➡



THE MAGNETISM OF BANSKO

Sports and cultural calendar of Bansko

The sports events and the long list of cultural happenings in Bansko ensure pleasant experiences for the guests of the town throughout the year.

The small town of the Bulgarian national revival hosts a number of big sports competitions in both summer and winter.

Some of the traditional annual sports competitions are: the International Arm Wrestling Tournament carried out in May every year, the International Football Tournament for the Tanne Cup, again in May, the Republican Orienteering Championship, the high cross-country capability car racing and others.

The sports calendar of Bansko for the 2004-2005 winter season includes the traditional ski alpine discipline starts for the PIRIN and KAPI national cups – in February for children and in April for men and women.

Bansko will host again the prestigious biathlon events, the alpine starts for the BALKAN OPEN CUP, the international extreme skiing and snowboarding competition, the republican snowboard championship, the white-sport veterans' championship and others.

Bansko has an extremely rich catalogue of cultural events. A part of them have preserved the traditions in folklore, customs, woodcarving, painting and are of regional importance. These are the holidays of Bansko's tradition celebrated in May every year and on the Day of Bansko, 5th October.

Tourists accept with great interest the annual culinary exhibition of Bansko's dishes and specialities, the Easter and Christmas celebrations, the New-Year kukeri (mummers) competition, the numerous folk concerts and Bansko national costume reviews, the religious and everyday traditions preserved up till now...

With its centuries-old culture inherited from the past and with its various cultural forums carried out here, the mountain resort may freely call itself a FESTIVAL TOWN.

The festivals hosted by Bansko are quite different in nature and themes. In Between Three Mountains is a folklore festival for authentic Macedonian songs. Both Bulgarian and foreign singers, mostly from the neighbouring countries Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey perform in it. The festival is with over ten-year history and is carried out like a competition.

So far, performers from over 20 countries have ap-



peared on the stage of the prestigious international jazz festival.

The big rock concert of stars of the 70s and 80s organised by TANNE Hotel, which continues for 8 hours, has established itself as an annual event.

The children's festival under the auspices of TANNE Hotel gives an opportunity to young talents from the municipality of Bansko to perform and make their talent known.

Everything the visitor discovers here – history, culture, traditions and customs, specific cuisine, ancient architectural style, authentic folklore, unbelievable humour and rich literature, makes the small mountain town from the national revival a peculiar symbol of the Bulgarian spirit and arouses interest in it. This is where its magnetism lies. No other town offers possibilities for mountain tourism and winter sports and competitions, for congress, eco and country tourism, for alpinism and spa treatment, angling, mountain cycling, summer and winter walking tours in the mountain... And the mountain is rich in crystal clear lakes and natural sites, and offers fascinating routes. This is why thousands of tourists pass through this place to rediscover Bansko and Pirin – two names associated forever with the unique magnetic power of genuine beauty.

Materials:
Zdravka Milchova
Vaklina Todorova



Destinations

BOROVETS

TWO IN ONE



State and local authorities, and companies with strong positions on the world markets have held out their hands to each other to put a new destination on the map of tourism. It is situated in one of the most beautiful places in Bulgaria – the Rila mountain, the most abundant in rivers, streams and lakes, whose highest peak is rising above all other mountain peaks on the Balkans and poses a challenge to all lovers of tourism and extreme sports. Its centuries-old forests white with snow in winter are magnificent to look at and have always inspired poets and writers. One of them says that they give forth the sensation of youth and eternity of real beauty. During the summer it is possible to see animal and plant species that can only live close to the stone of Rila and in their preserved natural habitat.



The Samokov – Borovets – Beli Iskar resort-and-tourist destination project has already made its first steps. The municipality of Samokov, some known Bulgarian companies and investors will register a company. Businesspersons from foreign countries, too, have taken interest in building the destination. Leading companies on the world market tender for contracts for building aerial lift equipment. One of them is Italy. The natural beauty of Rila has conquered the hearts of foreigners and there are British who are already buying property in Iskrovere – an area whose name comes from the great number of rivers and streams running round pretty villages. There the intransient traditions of the Balkan people have been preserved, one of them being their preference for home-made strawberry, raspberry and blueberry jams. One of the attractions of eco tourism



is the possibility of having delicious breakfast of freshly picked fruit prepared over the fire of the hearth.

Super Borovets enjoys the advantage of being in proximity to the capital of Bulgaria. It is 20 km from the mineral springs and modern swimming pools, and it only takes a few hours to reach the imposing Rila Monastery. The project includes building up of lift facilities to connect the mountain with the famous skiing centre and resort Borovets and the town of Samokov, which has its cultural sites, too. A five-star hotel will be built in the heart of the mountain at an altitude of 1600 m above the sea level,



which will afford a fine view of the mountain peaks and the pulsing life of the populated places below. Architects have taken into account the different tourists' preferences with regard to ski runs – some are to be steeper and difficult, while beginners will be able to go downhill along the gentle ski paths. They will not be able to bathe in the Seven Lakes called the 'Eyes of Rila' because of the low temperature of their crystal clean water, but they will be able to get charged with energy and will gather impressions that will make them feel warm in their strenuous daily round. The virgin nature has long attracted tourists who are not admirers of hotel comfort and luxury. What they look forward to is the campfire whose warmth has attracted other sensation-seekers, too, the romance of the guitar and the flavour of barbecue. If you are one of these tourists, don't forget to put your warm sweater, which your mum knitted last year, as well as your comfortable shoes in your backpack, because the mountain slopes will certainly entice you into visiting them. Once you have read these lines carefully, it is not a bad idea to set out to the nearest place where you can buy a ticket to Bulgaria and please your dearest with a Christmas present – a trip to Bulgaria. Borovets is 70 km from Sofia airport and there is convenient transport.

Haven't you set out yet?!

Desislava Stoyanova

THE STRANDJA PERIWINKLE INVITES TOURISTS.



Until recently the region of Strandja was little known as a tourist destination, of course not counting the Black-Sea coast. Today a number of villages in Strandja develop successfully country, cultural and eco tourism within the territory of the Strandja Natural Park.

WHY IS THE PERIWINKLE THE SYMBOL OF STRANDJA?

The Strandja periwinkle (*Rhododendron ponticum*) is listed in the Red Book of Bulgaria. In Europe it is only spread in the



Strandja Natural Park and in the Turkish part of the mountain. This shrub is a peculiar bridge between the “ancient life” times (from the last glaciations of the Tertiary) and the present day. It is found as evergreen undergrowth in beech-tree forests and bursts into bloom in the beginning of June. Its pontic species grows only here and in the region of the Caucasian Mountain.

The museum of history in Malko Turnovo is located in 3 old local houses (owned by the well-known local Dyakovs family) and is one of the 100 national tourist sites. It contains exhibits from the Thracian and the Roman periods (5th – 3rd centuries BC) – gas lamps decorated with pictures of animals, odoriferous-oil glass vessels and bronze safety pins. The only craft preserved in these lands until now – carpet making, has been presented, too. Of interest are also the photos of beehive tombs – sanctuaries, including the most imposing one in the Mishkova Niva area, called ‘Heroon’, which is the second biggest after Perperikon. A Thracian chieftain is supposed to have been buried there. A Roman villa was discovered next to it. Another such tomb dating from the same period can be seen in the Propada area.

In one of the museum-houses there is a rich natural collection prepared under the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme. The region is the natural habitat of wild boars, roe deer, red deer, jackals, woodcocks and pigeons. The major migratory path Via Pontica passes over the mountain and near the Atanasovsko lake there is a special bird observatory for watching the 257 bird species. The most typical of them are Black stork, Egyptian vulture, Grey-headed woodpecker, eagles, Dalmatian pelican, Pygmy cormorant, etc. Strandja has the richest vertebrate fauna represented by 261 species, of which 40 freshwater and transitory fish species

such as Carp, shad (*Alosa caspia bulgarica* Drensky), Balkan trout, Sea zander and others. The coastal strip of land abounds in 48 fish species. Centuries-old natural oak- and beech-tree forests occupy 88% of the park area. There are 56 endemic plant species, which enjoy spread only here. The most interesting of them are: periwinkle, whortleberry, yew-tree, heather, oak-tree, medlar-tree, common heather, oriental beech, the Mediterranean shrub *Cistus salvifolius* L. and a number of others. Probably because of its extremely great plant variety, the park ranks first in Europe.

NATURAL PARK OF STRANDJA

It was declared open in 1995 and is the largest protected area in the country (1161 sq. km). The park occupies the Bulgarian part of the mountain with an outlet on the sea. The whole municipality of Malko Turnovo and parts of the municipalities of Tsarevo and Primorsko are located within its territory, incorporating a total of 21 towns and villages with a population of about 8000. In the park there are 5 reserves: Silkosia (the first reserve in Bulgaria), Tisovitsa, Sredoka, Vitanovo and the Uzunbuzhak biosphere reserve. The karst region comprises also 12 protected areas. The highest peak in the Bulgarian part of the Strandja Mountain is Golyamo Gradishte with an altitude of 710 m above the sea level. In good weather the Bosphorus can be seen from it.

An undoubted hit of the last tourist season was the village of Brashlyan. It is an architectural and historical reserve. Here you can see 18th – 19th century. Here is also the St. Demetrius church from the end of 17th century, the monastery school, the ethnographic collection and the visitor's centre of Natural Park Strandja. The neighbouring village of Stoilovo is known for the greatest number of donkeys in the whole area and for its donkey safari. Our walk is long and is quite an attraction. Every donkey must have its guide because otherwise it will just go back home to eat and will refuse to follow the route.

One of the most vivid proofs that the mountain has preserved the pagan rituals of Thracians is fire dancing. Even to this day its centre has been the Village of Bulgari ethnographic reserve. The ritual is performed there every year during the celebration of the Day of St. St. Constantine and Elena. On this day the nestinars (fire dancers) take out 3 icons from their so-called konak (chapel) and go round the church with them. Then they offer sacrifice and dance on glowing embers. In the Kamaka (stone) area there is a Thracian sanctuary cut in the rock, which is from before 3000 years. The rock solar circles for the sacrificial animal offering have been preserved. The name of the place comes from a big mushroom-shaped stone with a small opening beneath. The legend says that those

who manage to squeeze through the hole are absolved of their sins. An impressive panoramic view is opened from the Kamaka and one can see the Golyama Papia peak in the distance, near Tsarevo. The name derives from the Greek word for 'peak'.

On the way to Gramatikovo we cross the 147 km long Veleka River, which is the cleanest in the country. Trout breed in the upper course of the river. In its 10 kilometre-long part from the village of Brodilovo to the mouth, the river is navigable. At the point of its flowing into the sea it forms beautiful narrow sand strips. Then we pass through the Kachul area where there are several bamboo plantations. The biggest holy spring in Strandja, Inipasha, whose water has healing properties, is found here. Those who have come to seek cure leave some of their clothes on the rocks for health and luck. Quite attractive is also the Gorska Sbirka area, which has a small corner with a lot of photos and a collection of life-sized taxidermy mounts of animals and birds. The name of one of the best-planned populated places in the region with a game breeding station, Gramatikovo, derives from the Greek word for "literate man". The chapel, which is not more than 4 km away, can be reached in jeeps and on foot. In 1870 the kralis (a then Turkish army of irregulars and mercenaries) destroyed the place inhabited by monks, but in five-years' time it was restored and sanctified by a local pilgrim woman, who had had a dream of its revival. Beneath the chapel there is a cave with three branches and in one of them there had been a holy spring with healing properties of its water. You can take a photo near the chapel, on the background of a venerable oak-tree from the Tertiary Era. The Midsummer Day is one of the most respected holidays of Thracian pagan culture in these lands.

About 400 people, half of them retired, live in the village of Brodilovo, which is situated at the foot of the Golyama Papia peak. About 30 of them engage in tourism. The name of the village derives from the Bulgarian word *brod* (ford) because of the ford where the Veleka River, which runs near the village, can be crossed wading. Citizens of Sofia and foreigners, including a well-known contemporary British writer, have bought a lot of the uninhabited houses in the village.

Tourists are offered three circular routes – small, medium and big. For example, the big one includes safari in jeeps to virgin forests and encounters with *zelenika*. After walking for thirty minutes you will reach the Milekop area with a fountain, a shed used also as a dining room and a watering trough for the game. The eco trail here has become a fact owing to the Kingdom of Monaco's Programme, which provides possibilities for development of cycling tourism.

In the Harmanya area there is a shed with a wonderful view to the village. Women dressed in national costumes meet visitors with folk songs and dances, demonstrating the Midsummer Day tradition. Then the visitors get on donkey-drawn carts, pass along the bridge over the Veleka River, and stop at the sawmill in Brodilovo.

The hospitable and friendly inhabitants of Brodilovo invite visitors in one of their country cottages used for accommodation, where tourists can taste delicious homemade specialties such as fresh vegetable salad, homemade yoghurt and cow milk, Strandja haricot beans cooked in a pot, small flat loaf with a mixture of ground dried herbs, salt and paprika, cheese and egg pasty, homemade biscuits, and all these accompanied by homemade grape brandy (*rakiya*).



BLACK SEA



NORTHERN BLACK SEA COAST

Clean and calm sea with shallow sloping sandy bottom, wide beaches with fine-grain golden sand, venerable forests and numerous mineral springs. All these features make the Northern Black Sea coast an attractive place for Bulgarian and foreign holiday-makers. Even the most refined requirements will be satisfied by the modern resorts of Zlatni Piassatsi, Albena, Riviera, Roussalka, Slanchev Den, St. St. Konstantin and Elena. The greatest fans of natural beauty and historical places can find peace in the Balchik botanical garden or the museum at Kaliakra horn. Exotic nature, rich history, modern construction - this is what our northern Black Sea offers.

SOUTHERN BLACK SEA COAST

Picturesque bays and whimsical rocks, spacious beaches with sand dunes and warm sea create the attractive force

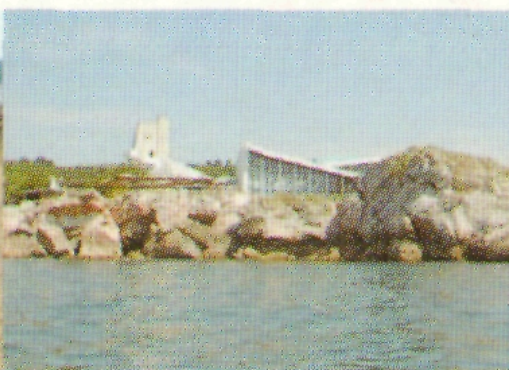


of the Bulgarian Southern Black Sea Coast. Wonderful nature in combinations with modern construction - this is the magic of the holiday villages of Elenite, Slanchev Bryag, Nessebar, Sozopol... To the north long indented coast line is bordered by the farthest spurs of the Balkan range and to the south - by the heights of the Strandzha Mountain. Even nowadays the unique culture in Strandzha is a part of the attitudes and habits of Ahtopol, Tsarevo, Kiten, Primorsko. In restaurants and bars foreign tourists are enchanted by the unique artistic atmosphere of the Strandzha fire-dances. History, culture, nature and luxury combined together - this is our southern Black Sea coast.



HOLIDAY CLUB

RUSSALKA
HOLIDAYS



RUSALKA

EVGENIA GENCHEVA

Executive Director of Holiday Club Rusalka

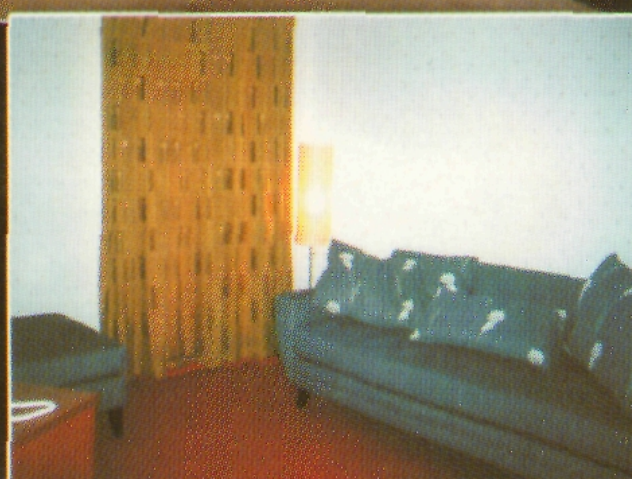
One of the pearls of Russalka Holidays tourist holding is the holiday club Russalka - Elite, located 90 km northeast of Varna. Situated in the nature reserve Tauk Liman (Bird's Bay), amidst a picturesque oak forest, near the popular national historic reserves of Yailata and Cape Kaliakra. The small sheltered sand beaches, water caves, crystal-clear see water in which dolphins play, rare flora, numerous bird species and archaeological monuments dating back millennia, create an incomparable atmosphere for wonderful holidays.

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BALCHIK

THE BLACK SEA PEARL



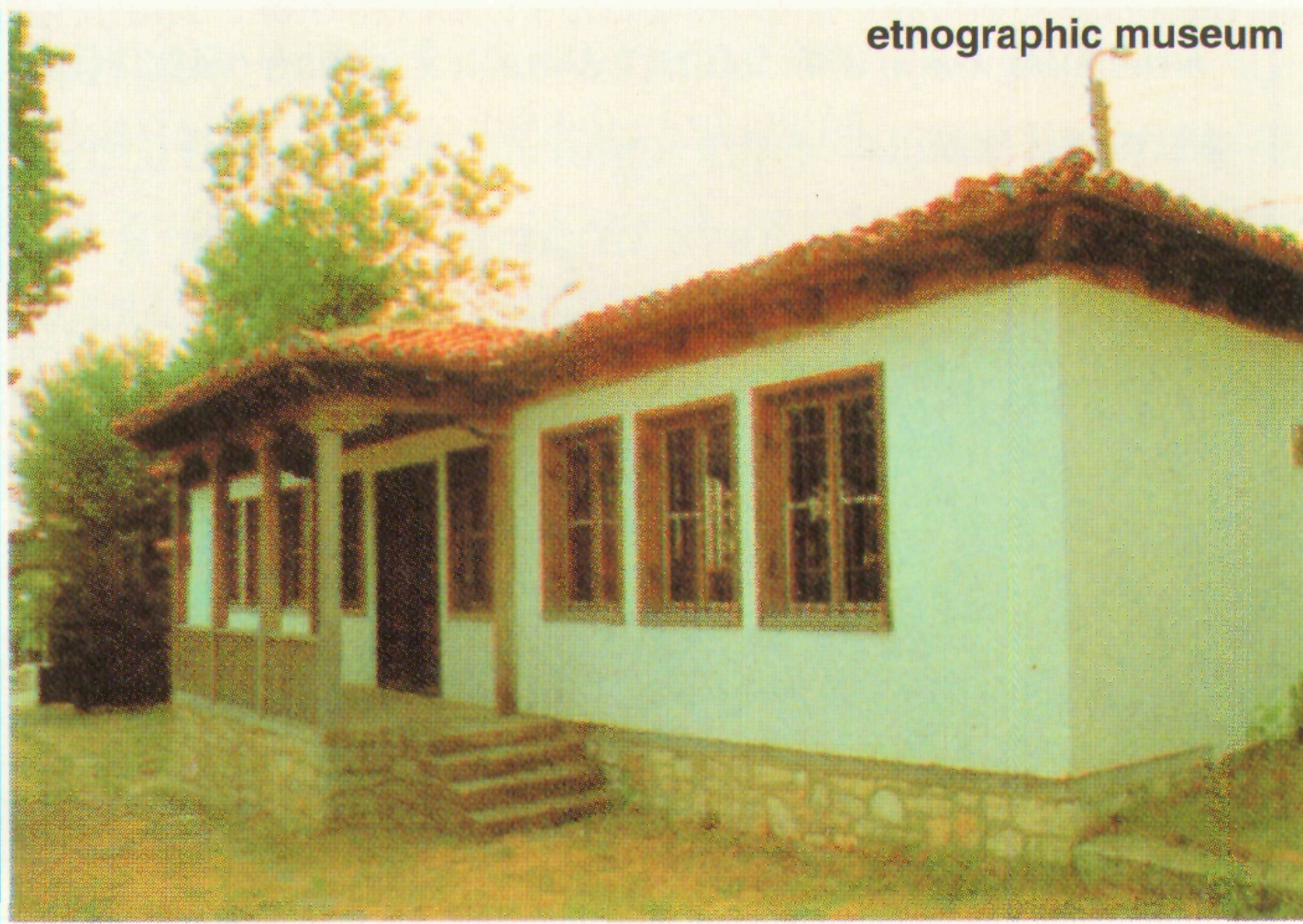
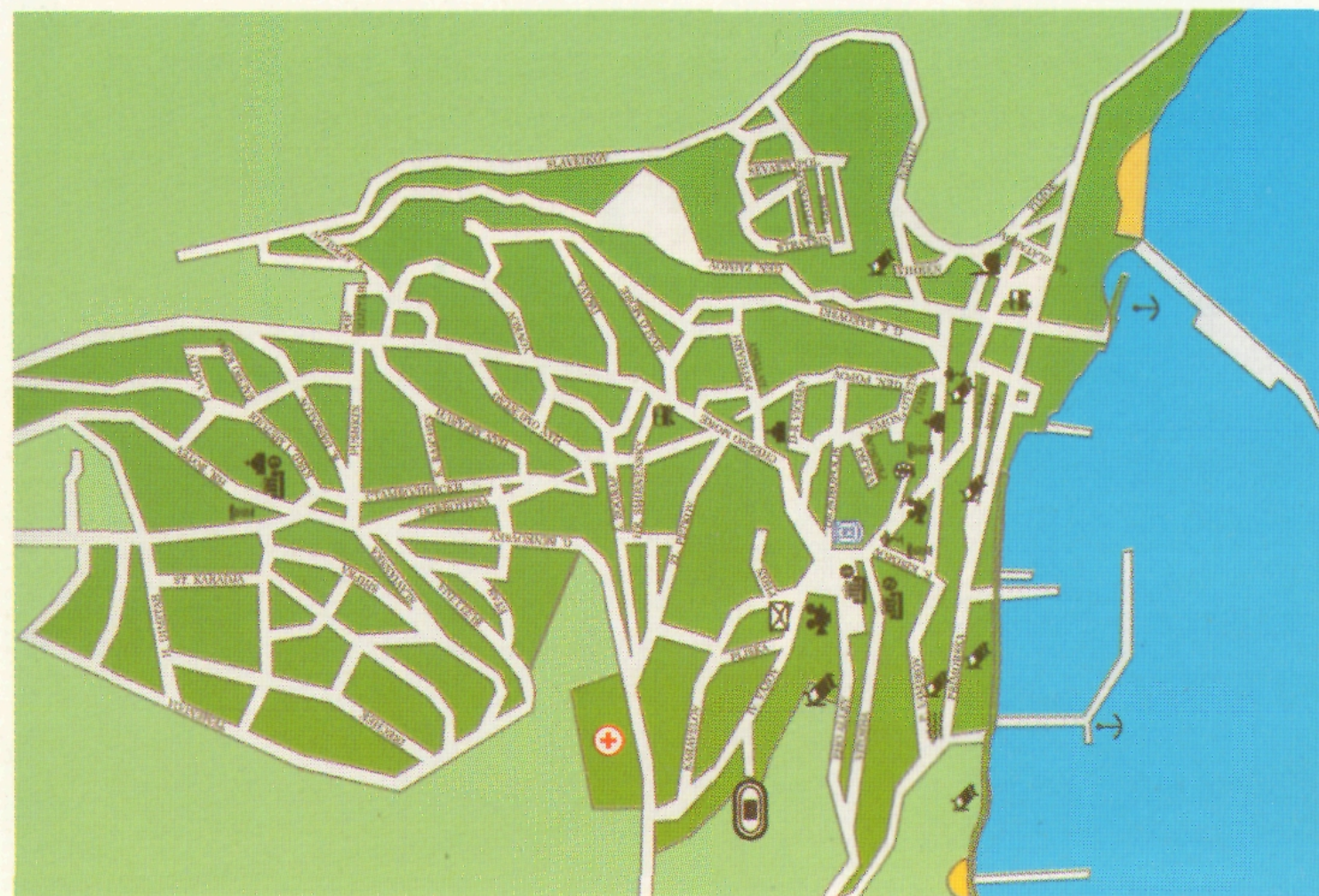
view from the palace

The toponym is of an ancient Bulgarian origin, but it was not until the middle of the 16th century that it was officially recognized. In the beginning of the 17th century, by old tradition kept alive over the centuries and accepted by the Ottomans, a town with the new name of Balchik was built on the ruins of Kravuna. It was declared a district centre under a Sultan's firman.

Soon after 1847, the Bulgarian centres of spiritual culture were burnt down. However, those were the times of the Bulgarian National Revival, which had great impact on events, so in 1866-1870 they were restored. In 1872, 7000 subjects of the Sultan – Bulgarians, Turks, Greeks, Jews and Gagauzi, inhabited the place. The town had already become a 'cosmopolitan'

centre and conditions were conducive to the formation of a stable Bulgarian community, whose concern was to be opening of schools and building of churches. That became possible under the protection of the eminent patriot of Balchik, granddad Koicho Raichov, born in Tryavna.

In the modern history of Bulgaria the town is known as one of the first 66 districts and district centres. Between 1879 and 1959 it was the centre of one of the wealthiest and most prosperous districts. In the beginning of the 19th century 7 joint-stock companies were already operating there – wine making and leather factories, hops and tobacco processing factories, two flourmills and stone quarries. ➡



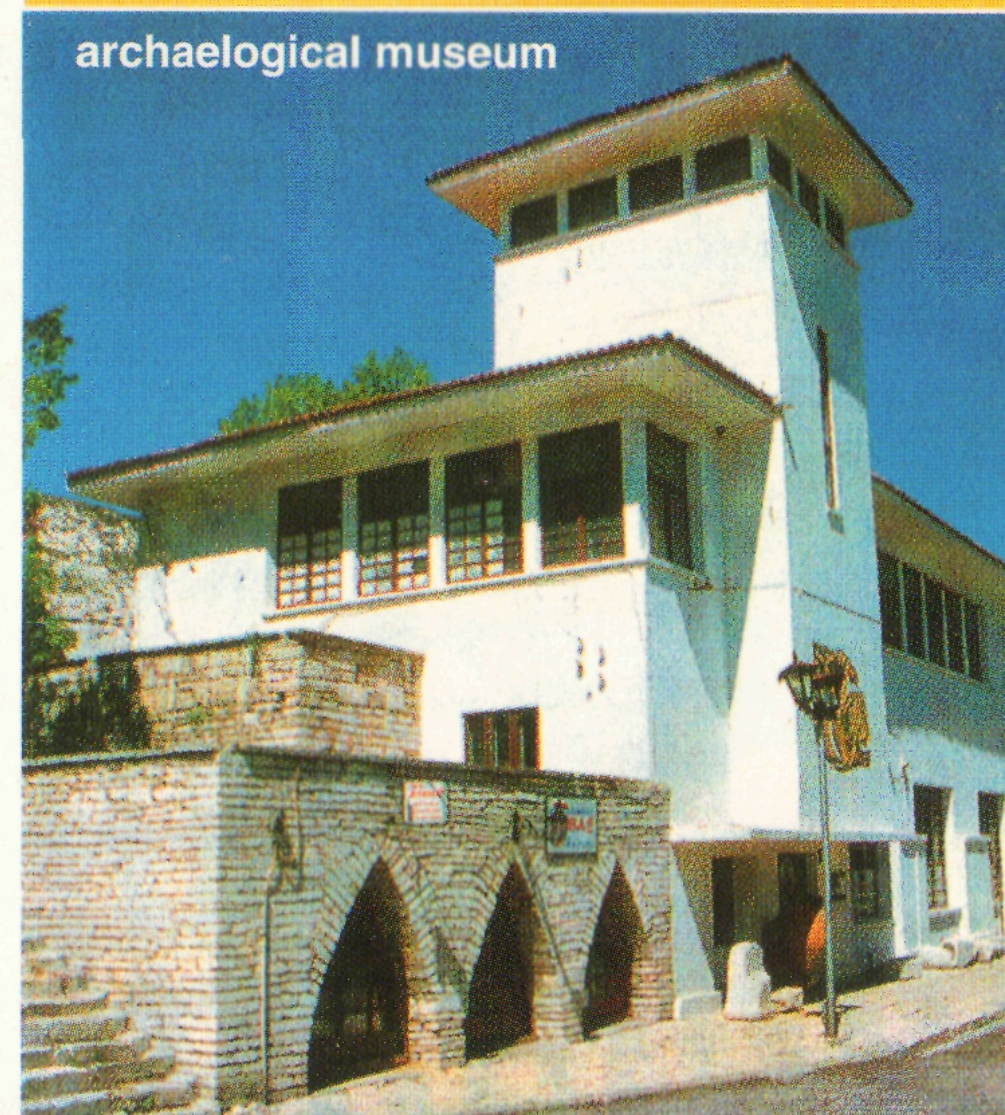
ethnographic museum



art gallery



st. nikola church



archaeological museum

Education developed successfully, too. The St. St. Cyril and Methodius district library was opened; a symphonic orchestra and a town choir were set up, and the Chernomorets Sports Society was founded.

Today the town of Balchik is a well-known international resort with its rich historical past and sites, incredible architectural style of its buildings, beautiful countryside and kind and hospitable people. In proximity to the town are the world-known Black-Sea resorts of Albena and Golden Sands, the monuments of history in Varna, the Aladja Monastery and the Stone Forest natural phenomenon.

In the town there are a lot of museums and art galleries, monuments and churches. A really impressive place is the Museum of History and Archaeology with its unique numismatic collection and exceptional objects of the ancient and mediaeval culture of past civilizations, as well as the ethnographic house where the urban and rural everyday life have been presented. Another site worthy to visit is the national-revival complex comprising the restored school from the same epoch, next to the St. Nicholas Church with its original icons made by icon-painters from the Samokov and Tryavna schools, and the ruins of the ancient and mediaeval town of Dionysopolis and Kravuna. The art gallery has one of the best collections in the country. Nowadays the town is also a centre of a number of traditional cultural events and festivals.

THE PALACE IN BALCHIK – THE SUMMER-DREAM OF A QUEEN

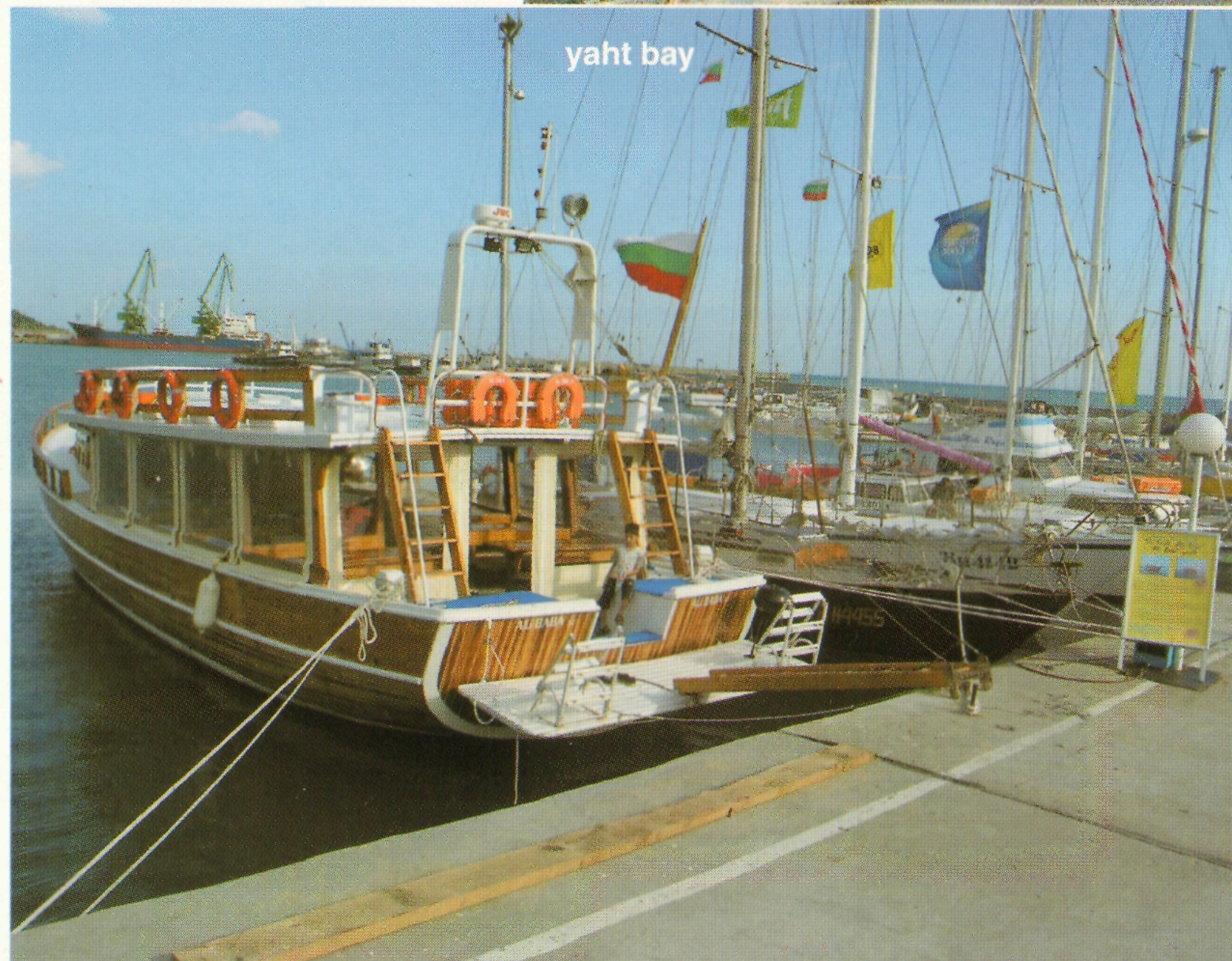
In 1924, Queen Maria of Romania was fascinated by that heavenly nook – the Bulgarian piece of land, nestling between the white rocks of Balchik and the sea. The centuries-old trees, the wild flowers, the brooks and the birds, even the old mills that had long died away and the dried stone fountains enchanted the First Lady of Romania.

The Italian architects Augusto and Amerigo designed the Peaceful Nest. The extravagant minaret imparts some oriental charm to the palace.

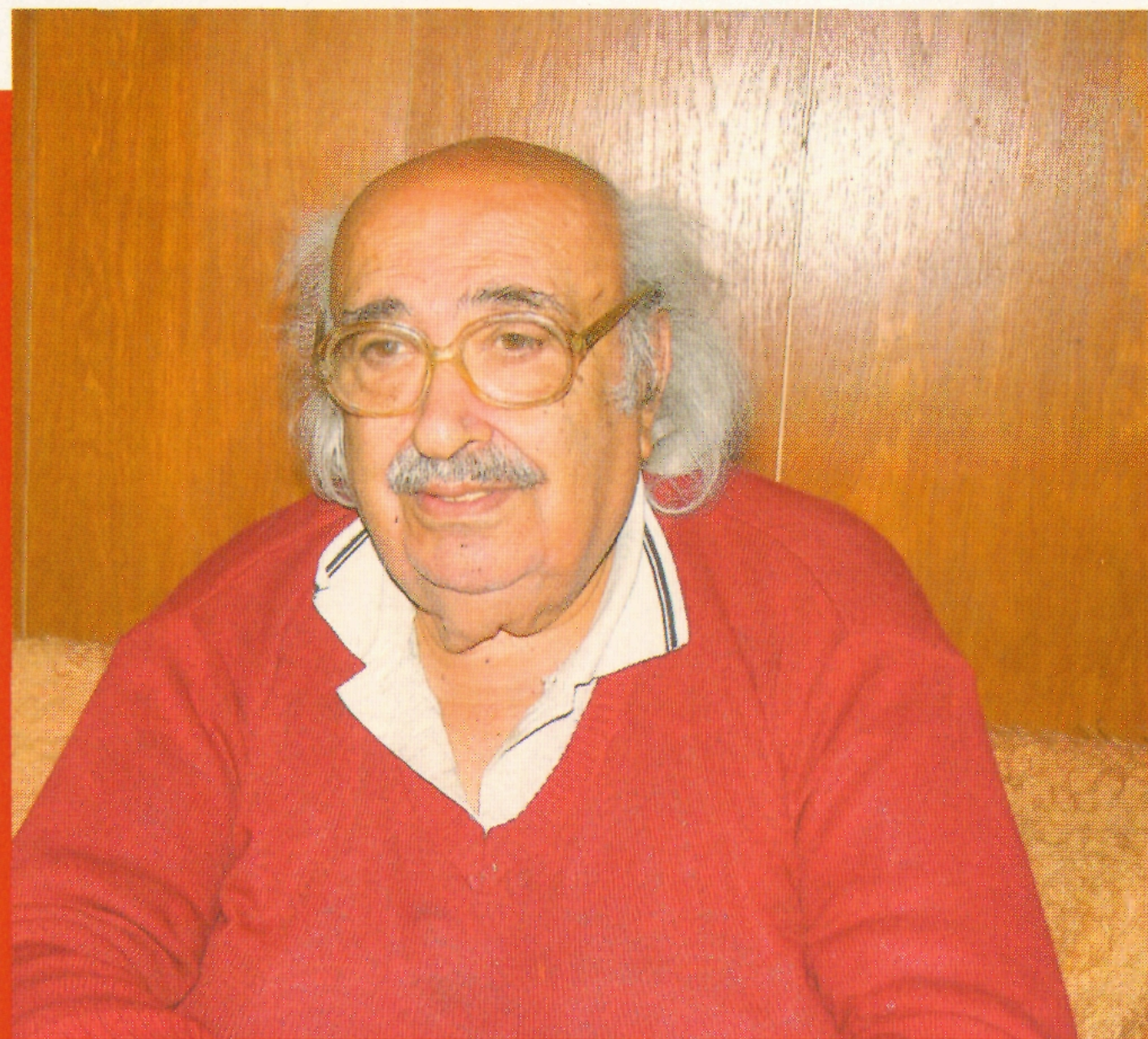
The old mills were restored and the new buildings were a continuation of the architectural style of the past – their lower parts were made of Balchik stone and their roofs were covered with Turkish tiles.

The Swiss garden designer Jules Janine created the magnificent vegetable kingdom of the park.

The queen's stone throne is the favourable place of tourists.



yaht bay



Georgi Kazaliev

SMOLYAN REGION NATURAL GENERATOR OF HEALTH

ventions have proved that lovers of the mountain visiting these areas can feel the impact of the fresh air with healing properties even on the second day of their stay. According to information supplied by Dr Baltov – a long-standing physician in Pamporovo, people having eczemas get cured of them after a 14-16 days' stay, without using medicines. The only thing they have to do is go out for walks following the indicated routes and the eczemas disappear by themselves. Moreover after the recommended regular walks in these areas, tiredness and headache disappear; high blood pressure, bronchial asthma, skin-deep wounds and ulcers are successfully treated. Complaints of neuroses disappear, too. In a number of scientific works abroad it is pointed out that ions are successfully applied in the treatment of bronchitis, pulmonary tuberculosis and coronary insufficiency.

It is known that negative ionisation in the world is provoked artificially. This is done in big cities, parks, plants, laboratories and other places designed for rest and recreation. However these artificially caused phenomena are short-lived and do not have the same effect as the one of the natural generator in the Smolyan region. It will not be an exaggeration to say that not only in Bulgaria, but also in Europe at large there is not a place and a natural phenomenon like this.

Along with the mountain breeze, of great importance for the production of negatively charged ions in the air are also the running rivers and white water streams. And the whole area round Smolyan abounds with such brooks, streams, rivers and lakes. In all these cases the negative ions remain in the air and the positive ones go into the soil and water. This phenomenon is just the opposite of the phenomenon observed in coastal areas where the positive ions are in the air and the negative ones remain in the water. Of special importance for the negative ionisation is also the FORMATION OF RESINS, which not only saturates the atmosphere with aromatic substances, but also cools the air. In these areas one breathes better and feels satisfied. Therefore, it is not accidental that the Smolyan region is indicated as a leader by number of centenarian and long-lived people.

This short article does not deal with the scientific grounds of the research because of the great number of mathematical formulae and other theoretical conclusions. It only focuses on the positive effects of the phenomenon, because in our busy and insecure times, when environmental pollution has reached such high levels, the only OASES left for 'our security and health' are the regions mentioned above.

The Rhodope Mountains have always attracted scientists' attention to their flora and fauna, natural resources and beauties, to their folklore art and culture, and perhaps to the most valuable thing there – THE BROAD-MINDEDNESS AND FASCINATION OF THE RHODOPIAN'S SOUL. Everybody has been talking about the Rhodopians. Even today Orpheus' song, taken up by the wind, floats over forests and valleys and fascinates the people. And the unfailing glow of Spartacus' sword shows the Rhodopians' bravery in their struggle for happier and healthier life. Yet there is a recess in the Rhodopes, mysterious and new, enchantingly beautiful and everlasting – the SMOLYAN region.

Smolyan is in the centre of the Middle Rhodopes and is with an altitude of 800 to 1150 meters. Nice forests and green meadows, picturesque waterfalls and caves, flowers with unique beauty surround the town, which is filled with the eternal smell of the Mountain. But while the town of Smolyan with its quarters fascinates visitors with its unique architectural style, road system and other facilities, the environs of Smolyan, according to scientific research, contribute to

LONGEVITY

The scientific research done has helped to find out that there is a highest degree of ionisation in the areas of the Malkata and Golyamata (small and big) rocks, near the Kriva River, beneath the Snezhanka peak, near the sanatorium in the village of Levichevo and mostly in the areas round the Smolyan lakes. These are the negatively charged ions produced by the local BREEZE, cosmic radiation, ore and mineral deposits and natural resources, and by a number of other factors such as the running white water streams, the resins and odour of the Mountain. So, tracing the influence of the above factors and the change in the direction of their effect, we have arrived at the conclusion that Rhodopians owe their health, strength, beauty and longevity to these natural factors. The effect of negative ionisation is the strongest from 0 to 9 a.m. and from 5 to 8 p.m., when ions range from 600 to 6000 per cubic centimetre, which is the major factor influencing people's physiology and psych. This is why we recommend going out for walks along the narrow, beautiful and sweet smelling paths at the time mentioned above. Obser-



EMPERORS AND TSARS ADMIRE OF THE BULGARIAN MINERAL SPRINGS



The curative properties of the Bulgarian mineral waters were known and used even in antiquity. Ancient medical complexes were built near the mineral springs: Hisar - ancient Augusta, Kyustendil - Pautalia, Bourgass mineral baths - Aque Kalite, later Thermopolis, Sapareva Banya - Germaneia, Sliven baths - Tanzos and Sofia - Ulpia Serdika.

All kinds of mineral water known on the planet can be found within the territory of Bulgaria. The over six hundred hydromineral sources are with a flow rate of 270 million litres per twenty-four hours. Most of them are warm or hot, springing from a great depth, which guarantees their purity.

The Bulgarian mineral waters are: average and strongly mineralised. They are applied for internal (drinking) spa treatment of diseases of the kidneys and the urinary system, of the gastro-intestinal tract - the liver and the gall bladder, of the internal secretion glands and chronic intoxications.

Macroingredient waters - when used in sufficient quantity they may have a pharmacodynamic effect similar to that of medicines.

Sulphate-containing mineral waters - especially effective for diseases of the liver and the gall bladder.

Ferrous sulphate mineral waters - having good curative effect in cases of anaemia.

Salty mineral waters - best for external spa treatment of rheumatic, degenerative diseases and inflammatory processes, as well as of traumatic, orthopaedic, neurological and gynaecological diseases.

Gas waters containing hydrogen sulphide and radon waters - their curative effect is biostimulative.

THREE DAYS ROUND BULGARIA'S

GEOGRAPHICAL CENTRE

text: Slavyana Radoslavova

We leave Sofia in the afternoon to get to Bozhentsi at dusk and spend the night there. While on the way our guides from the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism turn off the road a little to take us to the village of Beli Osam, 7 km

from Troyan. Our hosts are expecting us in the Stomnite guesthouse – a fascinating building from 1925. In the same yard there is an even older family house built in 1850. Their new owner, Tsvetan Dimitrov, has undertaken to restore the houses and make them suitable for tourists.

We arrive in Bozhentsi, which is 8 km from Gabrovo. Although the place is an architectural reserve, its cobblestone streets are bustling with life. Twenty-five guesthouses can accommodate 200 people at a time, but thank God, this never happens. We spend the night in the Hadji Velinov's Inn and the next morning, after we have seen the museum, had coffee made in hot sand and tasted the traditional byalo sladko (a sweet prepared from sugar, eggs, vanilla, glucose and walnuts), we set off to the higher parts of the Balkan.

On the mountain ridge, only 26 km from Gabrovo is the Uzana area – a vast meadow amongst centuries-old beech-tree forest. According to specialists' calculations, the geographical

bozhenci

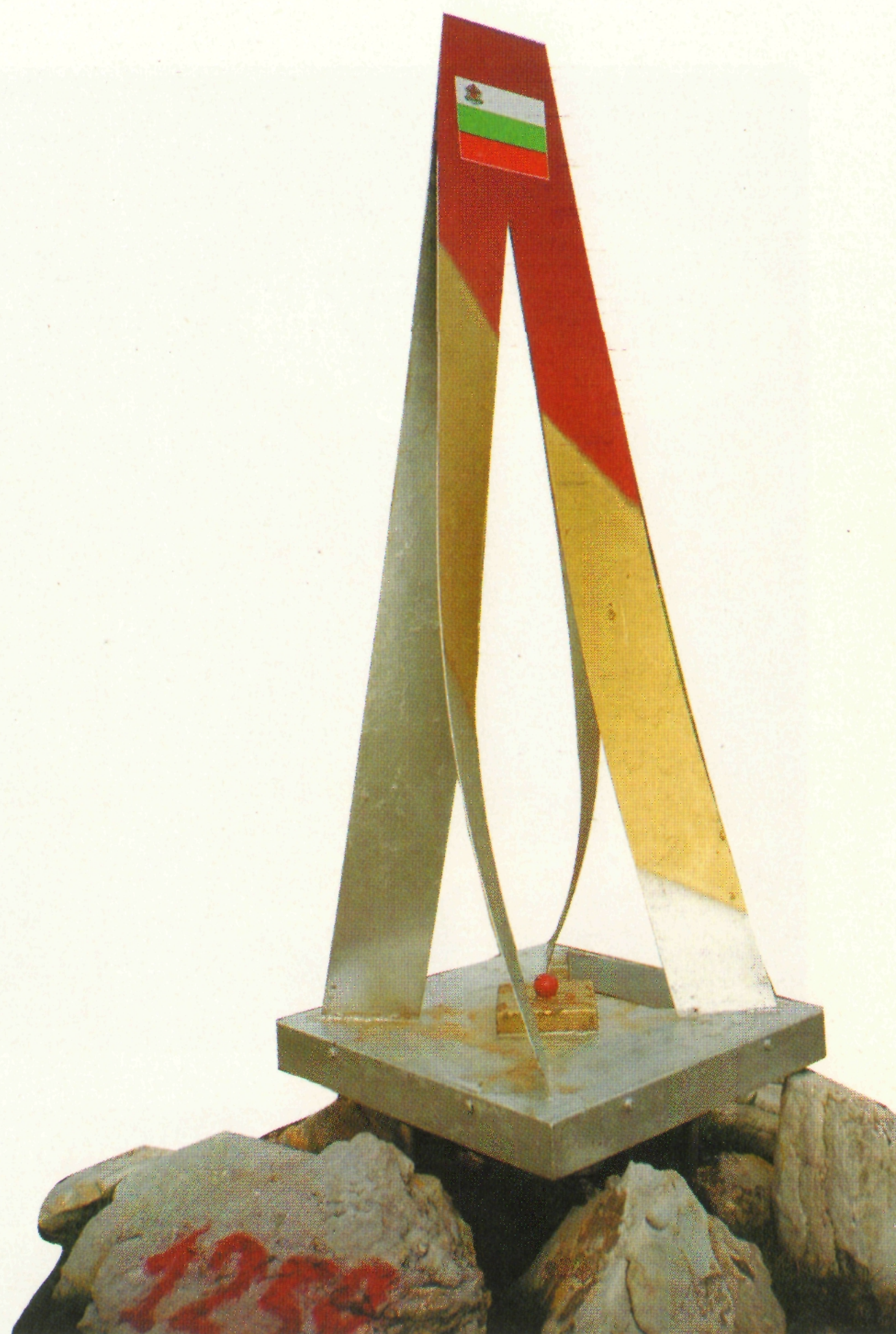


centre of Bulgaria is at this place. A metal sign has been placed here and as a rule, tourists have their photos taken standing next to it. The Prima-S hotel puts us up for the second night. There is no danger of feeling bored at Uzana – you can have a walking tour organised for you, hire a bicycle, ride on horseback, play court tennis or you can simply sunbathe on the soft grass. Winter sports-lovers can go snow jetting or skiing – in the area there are some easy ski runs and one that is really serious, the longest ski track in the Balkan Range (1100 m).

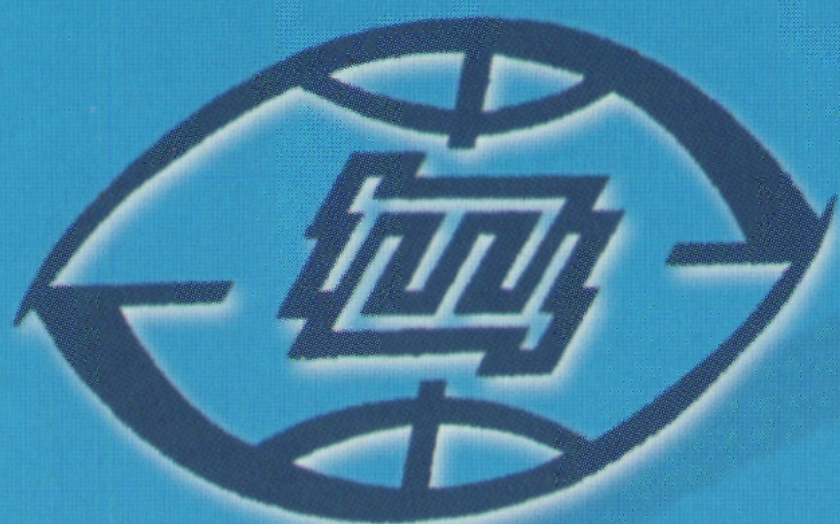
It takes 2 hours to get from Uzana to the Shipka Pass walking. On the way, wild nature lovers can enjoy different representatives of the vegetable and the animal kingdom, which the whole territory of the Bulgarka National Park abounds of. This national park was declared open in 2002 and is the newest in the country.

Having passed Shipka, we head for the village of Turnichane situated in the heart of the Valley of Roses. It is known for one of the biggest rose distilleries in the country, built in 1909 by the local merchant and factory-owner Encho Bonchev. In 1992 his inheritors had their ownership of the enterprise restored and it started operating again. The museum has been preserved, there is also a small shop selling products of the distillery. Tourists visit this place all through the year, but the influx is the greatest in May when the rose-picking season begins and this continues till about 20th July, when work on lavender processing is over.

The last stop on our itinerary is the village of Brestovitsa near Plovdiv, where wine is made literally in every house. One of the secrets is that grape gathering is done by hand; then barefoot girls trample down on it, pressing it to squeeze the juice. The wines of Bresovitsa owe their unique taste to this, as well as to the unique climatic conditions of the region. And this is where our tour ends.



the geographic centre of Bulgaria



STEREV TUR

Hotel Shterev - Karlovo is in the centre of the pretty town of Karlovo situated in the heart of the Valley of Roses. The hotel is a three-storey building. On the first and the second floor, there are 5 three-bed rooms, 2 single and 14 double rooms. They all are standard size, have local heating and bathroom en-suite. On the third floor, there are 7 single and 6 double rooms. They have air-conditioning, telephone, mini-bar and cable television. At the hotel, there is a restaurant, a daytime bar and a keep-fit hall for 50 people.

XOTEA ШЕПЕВ

HOTEL STEREV

BULGARIA, 4300 KARLOVO
It is 3 LEVEL HOTEL WITH 20 DOUBLE ROOMS/13 LUX/,
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ADDRESS: №1, 20 JULY PLAZA
TEL.: +359 335/93 380

MOTEL STEREV

BULGARIA, 4330 SOPOT,
ANEVO AREA-10 DOUBLE LUX ROOMS
TEL.: +359 3134/6161,
+359 3134/2025

Motel Shterev - Anevo quarter is near the town of Sopot, by the main sub-Balkan road Sofia – Burgas. It is convenient for a nice transit rest, as well as for a longer holiday at any time of year. Oil and a gas station, which is in the close proximity of the hotel, provides services 24 hours a day. There are 10 double rooms and 2 suites and they all have television, telephone and air-conditioning. The hotel offers a possibility to use a conference room seated for 25, barbecue for 20, a sports centre including a swimming pool, a tennis court and a mini-football pitch, a keep-fit hall and a sauna.

HOTEL STEREV

BULGARIA, 4330 SOPOT 20 DOUBLE ROOMS AND 1 APARTMENT.
ADDRESS: IVAN VAZOV 4 STR., TEL.: +359 3134/ 2233

Hotel Shterev - Sopot is in the town centre and has 21 double rooms and 1 suite. The rooms have bathroom en-suite and use electricity for heating. The hotel offers a paid car park, a restaurant, a daytime bar and a conference hall.

BOOM ON THE REAL ESTATE MARKET IN BANSKO OVER RECENT TWO YEARS

Much greater is the interest in real estate in Bansko shown not only by Bulgarian investors and well-off admirers of the mountain resort, but also by foreigners.

And the small town of the Bulgarian national revival can offer a lot.

Foreign investors, together with their Bulgarian partners show interest in the tourist business. A hotel complex, a holiday village and a block of flats are already under construction with foreign investments in the town environs.

The first who gave the start in the hotelier business is the owner of the German hotel Tanne, the honorary citizen of Bansko, Manfred Diehl.

After his start, other foreigners, mostly British and Russians, have taken up building hotel facilities in the town of Bansko and in the village of Banya.

At present the market offers land in the most attractive tourist zone in the town environs to foreigners who want to make investments together with Bulgarian partners. Rural property in the Gramadeto area is offered at the price of EUR 80 to 120 per sq. m.

Foreigners mostly seek to buy old massive houses in Bansko built of wood and stone, with open verandas, yard fenced in two-meter stonewalls and heavy wooden gates. However only few such houses are on sale and demand is many times higher than supply. So far, old houses in Bansko have been bought by Italians, Russians, Germans, and British and even by a woman from South Africa.

Foreign demand for land is insignificant since sale and purchase of land is limited by the existing legal regulations.

On the other hand however interest in ready flats is going up. About 500 flats are under construction and many of them are sold "in the green". The first type includes flats in blocks of flats. Their prices vary between EUR 800 to 1000 per sq. m.

Holiday houses have been a hit this year. They are hotel-type flats included in buildings with their own fitness facilities, reception, sauna, swimming pool and other extras, which their owners can use. The investor offers maintenance of the flat, cleaning and other services against payment of an annual charge. When the owners are away from the town for a long time the investor lets out their house.

Brand new holiday flats, which are the hit in Bansko, are sold at prices between EUR 1200 to 1300 per sq. m.

The only village from the municipality where foreigners have bought property is Obidim – Greeks and British have bought a few country cottages there.



THIS IS BULGARIA, IT IS EXPECTING YOU!

INFORMATION THROUGH TOURISM AND RECREATION MAGAZINE

The influx of tourists from Britain, Ireland, Japan, Germany and other countries to Bulgaria has grown bigger recently. Many of the foreigners buy houses and settle in Bulgaria. The peace and quiet, the natural beauties, the sea, the mountains and the diversity of mineral waters in the country attract them like a magnet. The good-natured Bulgarians with their well-known hospitality and warm smile, and the hearty welcome they give to them melt the ice in just a few days. All this makes foreigners feel as if they have lived in these towns and villages for years and that they have got into paradise.

Many of them have made Bulgaria their second home owing to Tourism and Recreation magazine. Every day our editors receive messages to the editor's office e-mail address: daker@cablebg.net from people asking us where it is good to settle, how to buy a house to advantage, which region is most suitable for their state of health, where they can practise their hobbies, etc.

If you want to settle in Bulgaria, contact Tourism and Recreation magazine, which will live up to your expectations.

E-mail: daker@cablebg.net

ZDRAVKA MALCHOVA

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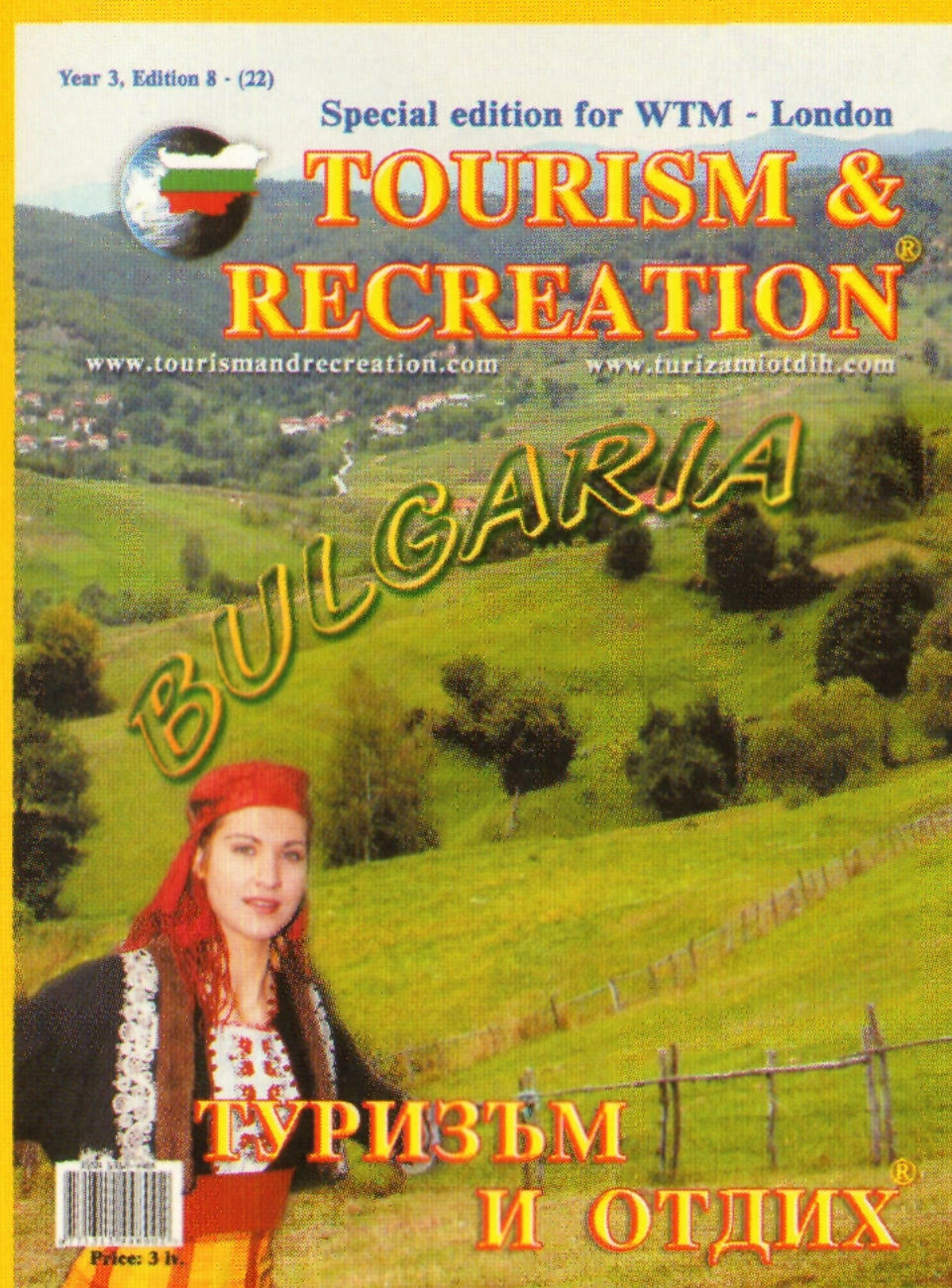
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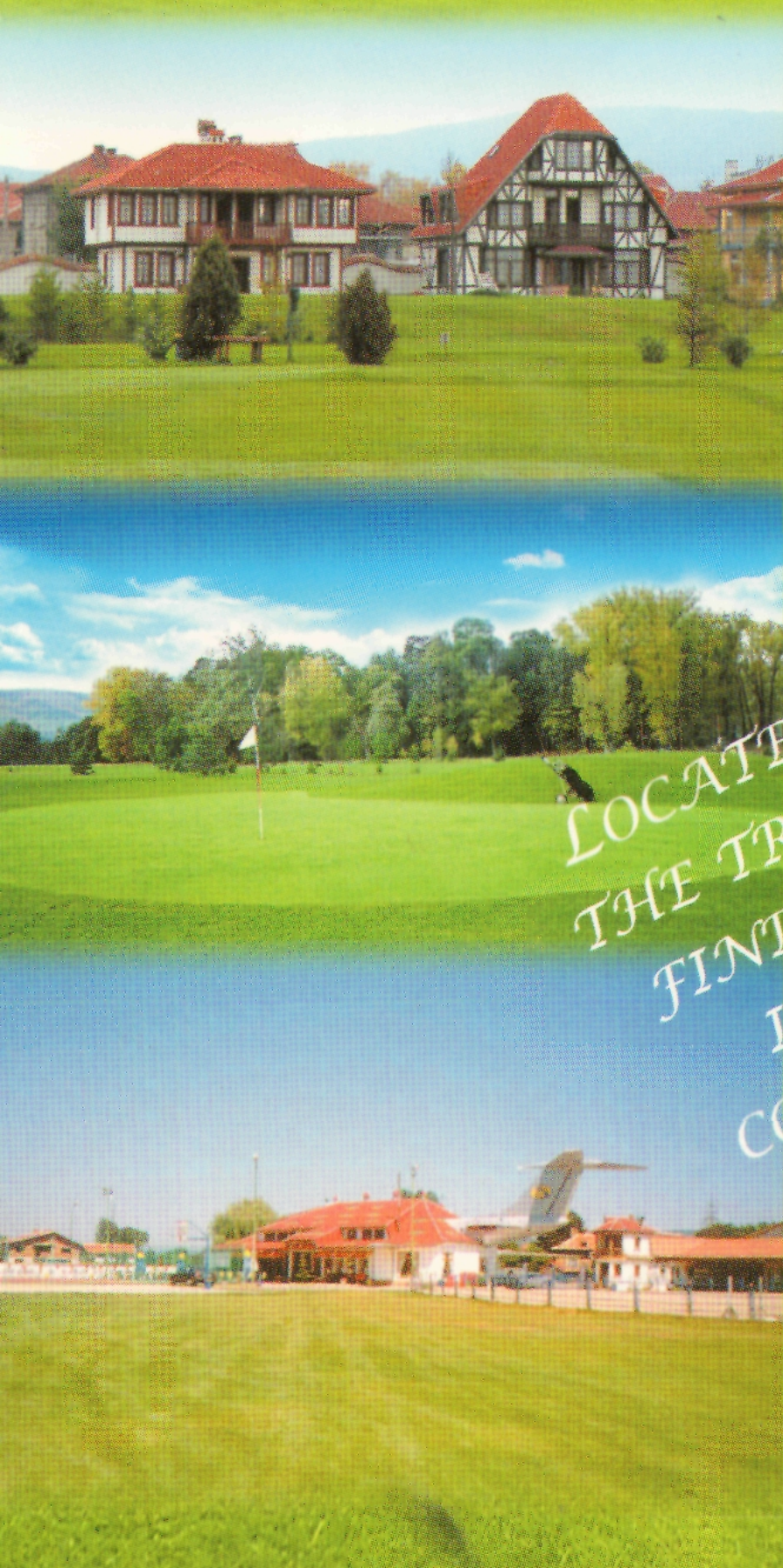
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